FASCISM IN ITALIAN CINEMA SINCE 1945

The Politics and Aesthetics of Memory

GIACOMO LICHTNER

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For Nikki.
'I will leave an extra pint . . .'

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Part I
Revisionism

1
Remembering the Long Second World War in Europe

If any further proof were needed, European memories of World War Two since 1945 prove that remembrance, in both its private and public forms, constitutes a powerful historical force in its own right, able to shape opinions, actions and events. Almost without exception, the memory of that terrible conflict has haunted the continent. Far from being the inert prerogative of witnesses and survivors, it has formed bonds and assumed new, shared identities; often sanitised, it has served governments well, and yet at times it has mastered them, rediscovering itself raw and untreated. Taking on unexpected meanings, it has adapted to new generations of Europeans who had no memory of the war itself, or had only a second- or third-hand one. In its infinite incarnations, throughout its long lulls and sudden bursts onto European political and cultural agendas, remembrance has engendered countless narratives of the past that have shown remarkable ability in adjusting to local contexts, from the polished national narratives of textbooks and monuments to half-forgotten stories around oxidised bronze plaques in village squares.

The fact that the inevitable departure of witnesses of the war does not abate political debates on the meaning, legacy and morality of the conflict and its belligerents demonstrates two elements that it is important to bear in mind on the approach path to this slippery subject. In the first instance, it shows that the memory of traumatic historical events can become an integral part of the moral and political identity of a nation – or of groups within a nation – and that, when that happens, it develops an inter-generational significance, a life of its own, severed from the original events. In the second instance, it lays bare that memory is not primarily about the historical analysis of the past, but rather about the political interpretation of the present. These are the lessons that Pierre

Nora, Jay Winter, Peter Novick and many other scholars, working on many case studies and through many different kinds of sources, have taught us since the late 1980s. In establishing the study of memory as a legitimate branch of the historical discipline, their work has led to a boom in memory studies, which has in turn overcome an early tendency to see history and memory as distinct and separate. They are not; they are linked inextricably by the media through which each is constructed and the political lenses through which each is interpreted.

Even as I write, a passing glance at English-language news in the first months of 2011 reveals not only this bond between history and memory, but also Europe's ongoing sensitivity with regard to World War Two. In Germany, online retail giants Amazon.com and iTunes removed songs banned by the German government, such as the marching anthem of the Waffen-SS, *Horst Wessel Lied*, but not before being exposed by *Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung* on the week of Holocaust Memorial Day 2011.[1] Meanwhile, German politicians and civil society continue to debate the wisdom of Erika Steinbach's crusade to institute a day of remembrance for Germans expelled from Eastern Europe after 1945, with the country torn between the desire to accord pity to affected individuals and the need to contextualise their historical presence in the East so as not to turn empathy into glorification.[2]

In Austria, much controversy has been caused by the failed extradition to Croatia of 95-year-old alleged war criminal Milivoj Asner,[3] in 2008, and more recently by a provincial bakery specialising in Nazi-themed commemorative cakes.[4] In Riga, on 16 March 2011, Latvian veterans of the Waffen-SS defied a government ban to carry out their annual march, flanked by supporters and detractors exchanging slogans of 'Stalin kaput' and 'Hitler kaput'.[5] Far from being a case of farcical playground politics, however, this was a thorny political issue, not only because of the large Russian ethnic minority present in Latvia, but because it revolves around a central question in the debates on national identity of most post-Soviet Republics: were Latvians who fought for the Germans anti-Communist patriots or Nazi collaborators and crude anti-Semites? Nor is history the only matter at stake here, because membership of the European Union requires a shared set of moral and political values, including the commitment to defend memory against neofascist and nationalist revisionism.

Elsewhere, issues of remembrance and interpretation of World War Two are more subtle but no less fractious. In Italy, the organisers of the annual Festival of Italian Song, known as *Sanremo* from the Ligurian town which hosts it, announced that the 2011 edition would pay

homage to the sesquicentennial of Italian unification by having the contestants sing the history of Italy through popular song. The lineup was to include the Fascist anthem *Giovinezza* and the best-known tune of the anti-Fascist Resistance, *Bella Ciao*. Started in 1951, *Sanremo* is one of those shows that longevity and popularity have turned into a national institution, at the same time loathed and hallowed. The competition is also a bellwether event, which often can provide the popular cultural pulse of the nation.[6] And, like all of Italian public television RAI's doings, *Sanremo* is intensely, and carefully, political. Perhaps as intended, the suggestion of awarding equal visibility to Fascism and anti-Fascism did cause widespread outrage, which eventually persuaded the show's organisers to pull both songs and seek refuge in the most political of apolitical apathies.[7] The hypocritical equidistance of a popular music show is but a symptom of ongoing debates over Fascism, anti-Fascism and the narratives that have dominated their post-1945 commemoration. In January 2011, Fiat workers outside Turin's Mirafiori plant joined in a rendition of *Bella Ciao* in protest against the company's restructuring plans: not for the first time in industrial disputes, the workers sought to claim the legacy of the anti-Fascist Resistance and simultaneously position their counterparts in the opposing ideological camp.

World War Two is everywhere in Europe, not only as commemoration but also as moral example, as genesis narrative for national and political identities, as benchmark for current affairs, as historical and political outpost to scale or defend: from the French trials of collaborators René Bousquet, Paul Touvier and Maurice Papon in the 1990s to the scandal surrounding European neofascist leaders in France, Austria and elsewhere; from the Dunkirk spirit regularly invoked in Britain to the ever-present ghosts of the Holocaust and of nationalism, most recently apparent in the Balkans; from the popularity of the History Channel's seemingly endless World War Two spin-offs to revisionist historiography and the re-emergence of defeated narratives. Even the deservedly much-praised Academy Award winner *The King's Speech* (Tom Hooper, 2010) managed to attract at least some criticism over its decision to skim over Edward VIII's Nazi sympathies and George VI's alleged anti-Semitism,[8] though the real issue there should have been the recasting of the stuttering Prince's relationship with Churchill,[9] whose sainted postwar persona is itself a reminder of World War Two's pervasiveness.

In keeping with the traumatic nature of World War Two, re-emergence of its memory in popular discourse coincides with the moments of most significant upheaval in post-1945 European history: 1968 and 1989.

These seismic shifts allowed new plates to emerge and revealed new complexities in the territory of memory. Interestingly, each of these events contained a significant generational conflict, a moral repositioning of the young in relation to the old, whose choices were intimately challenged. But, if 1968 threw open some of the hypocrisies of accepted memory, especially in the West, by posing the dreaded question 'what did you do in the war?', it was the end of the Cold War that overthrew the 44-year-old status quo in which European memories had developed.

In Eastern Europe, that revolution signalled the end of a totalitarian narrative that had hidden the ambivalent relationship of many countries with the German and Soviet invasions. In the Ukraine, for example, Omer Bartov has shown how the fall of the Communist regimes has brought about a re-evaluation of the nationalist right that stretches back to its fierce collaboration with Nazism.[10] In Western Europe, the end of the Cold War coincided with the second unification of Germany, a development that alone would reawaken continental memories of the Reich and, simultaneously, offer the country a chance to work on a joint historical memory of its National Socialist years. The first sight of German neo-Nazis, for example, or images of German troops in the Balkans during NATO's mission there in the 1990s might send shivers down many old spines and yet also confirm that Germany had developed the antibodies to assimilate and repel nationalist threats. Elsewhere in Western Europe, the demise of European Communism shook dominant discourses on World War Two that had been substantially shared between the conservative and Marxist-inspired anti-Fascist forces. Until 1989, the anti-Fascist consensus had been so dominant that it precluded almost all unorthodox memories, except perhaps in the privacy of homes, the silence of cemeteries, or the shabby nostalgia of local party branches. Alternative memories existed, of course, and occasionally emerged, as they did in France through Louis Darquier de Pellepoix's 1978 interview[11] or in Austria through the Waldheim controversy. In the 1970s in particular there was much debate in West Germany, France and Italy over the history of the war and the management of its legacy. Nevertheless, the legitimacy and morality of such counter-narratives were not items on the political agenda, as these memories remained essentially ghettoised by dominant anti-Fascist discourses of martyrdom and Resistance.

Since the late 1940s, the Soviet–American duopoly had dominated the development of European memories of the war, crystallising positions and encouraging the West to dilute processes of scrutiny, renewal

and retribution for the recent past, even where they had barely begun. Instead, in countries such as France and Italy, these much-needed investigations were replaced with the twin narratives of unwilling collaboration and widespread resistance: the former stipulated that Philippe Pétain's and Benito Mussolini's pro-German regimes were little more than unpopular criminal groups supported only by a few 'bad apples'; the latter established the two countries' anti-Fascist guerrilla, in fact marginal numerically and militarily, as a 'civic religion' that restored pride and dignity to tarnished societies.[12] Even in West Germany, the Adenauer governments constructed an institutional memory centred on the victimisation of the German people at the hands of Hitler and his henchmen.[13] Meanwhile, in the East, the Communist dictatorships faced the same task, rendered somewhat simpler, however, by the pretence of a clean break with the past: it was easy to suggest that the Nazis, like the capitalists, remained little changed across the border.

As events chased each other at a great pace, the geo-political restructuring of Europe occupied the corridors of power, while the necessary physical and psychological reconstruction of belligerent nations took precedence over making sense of a past which was rapidly being confined to history, and memory. Nevertheless, the two were inextricably linked, as national identities were rebuilt around a rupture with the immediate past in countries East and West of the Iron Curtain, perhaps with the exception of Great Britain and the partial exception of France. Supranational and domestic considerations determined form and content of national and group memories: the collapse of the Allies' united front or the response to the attempted genocide of the Jews informed memory in all European countries, while national prerogatives – such as the separation of Germany, the anomalous strength of the Communist party in Italy or the necessity to legitimise Gaullist wartime leadership in France – deeply affected each country's synthesis of the past.

In some nations the process attracted little dispute and thus took on less traumatic meanings. Although postwar memories in Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands are being revealed as more complex than had previously been thought,[14] they were nevertheless not as divisive as in many other parts of Europe. These were nations that had been invaded and occupied by Germany and that had, in their subjugation, held for the most part a coherently anti-Nazi position. Faced with defeat, the governments of Belgium, Holland and Norway, alongside many others, removed themselves to Britain, into an exile from which to sustain their war effort and their national pride. Reinstated after the liberation, they ensured institutional and cultural continuity and were able

convincingly to dismiss wartime collaborationists in their countries as an extremist and unrepresentative fringe.

This was not the case everywhere, however. In France, defeated in June 1940, Paul Reynaud's government turned down the chance to fight on, either from the colonies or from London, opening the door for Philippe Pétain's Vichy regime and gifting it constitutional legitimacy. Interviewed in 1969 by Marcel Ophuls, even the British wartime Foreign Minister Anthony Eden, albeit hesitant to judge a former ally, could not conjure a way to justify the French government's failure to seek representation in exile. The task was performed more easily in France, however, where the memory of Vichy would develop into what Henri Rousso has called 'the Vichy syndrome'.[15] At first, however, Vichy was erased simply by investing General Charles de Gaulle with a backdated authority that made him not just the political representation but also the moral embodiment of France. De Gaulle's France, centred around the twin concepts of the 'thirty-years' war' and the 'forty-million resistance fighters',[16] was as inclusive as it was inventive. It suited the French Communist Party, which could boast a leadership role in the Resistance, but it also served the conservative supporters of the Vichy government, such as Robert Aron,[17] who could use the General's narrative to argue that Vichy had deliberately acted as a shield against the worst of German occupation. De Gaulle's mythology enjoyed some longevity, not least because it was sufficiently malleable to soothe a battered but proud national identity.

Other occupied countries were less fortunate in their postwar settlements and less successful in accommodating different points of view. The Polish government, for example, had repaired to London after Germany and the USSR carved up Poland in 1939; Polish pilots had fought in the Battle of Britain, but the circumstances of their country's liberation would not allow their return. Post-1945 Polish memories of World War Two would thus be split between an official Communist narrative and a myriad of unofficial memories of martyrdom and survival, squeezed between twin military occupations. In this context, issues such as the Soviet mass execution of Polish officers at Katyń in 1940, collaboration with Nazism and Polish–Jewish relations were subordinated to a sanitised national memory, which is being challenged only lately, and only selectively.[18]

To different extents, all Eastern European countries shared this ambivalent relationship between liberation and renewed occupation, whether in 1939 they had already been part of the Soviet Union or not, like the Baltic republics. Until the 1990s, the aggressive

and far-reaching Communist control of institutionalised remembrance repressed unorthodox memories of the conflict in these countries.[19] However, experiences among the former Soviet republics varied significantly along political, ethnic, gender and generational lines: in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, first invaded by the Soviet Union in September 1939, Russian occupation dominates contemporary narratives of World War Two, though that is not at all the case for their significant Russian minorities[20]; in Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, however, governments have been busy asserting a distinct pre-Soviet identity, while Soviet nostalgia remains a powerful factor in the formation of a budding and still fragile national story.[21]

In occupied countries an unopposed narrative of victimisation was for the most part easy to develop and able to create a synthesis between different experiences of the war. Yet the successful postwar coexistence of different group memories did not always coincide with their actual reconciliation. In Czechoslovakia, Slovakia experienced between 1940 and 1945 an unprecedented irredentist fervour harnessed by the clerical Fascism of Jozef Tiso, with a resulting ambivalence towards the German dismantlement of Czechoslovakia, which Bohemians and Moravians did not share. The situation was even more complicated in Yugoslavia, the Serbian-dominated multi-ethnic kingdom invented at Versailles. Here World War Two spelt defeat and four years of occupation by two foreign forces, Italians and Germans, as well as a multi-layered civil war between the Communist-led partisan brigades of Marshal Josip Tito, the Croatian Fascist Ustaša movement and Yugoslav nationalist militias known as Chetniks. Historical religious tensions between Orthodox Christians, Catholics and Muslims compounded deep-seated ethnic rivalries and unresolved nationalist aspirations. The dominant postwar narrative in Yugoslavia, by then no longer a monarchy but a socialist republic, was signed by the triumph of Tito's partisans, although in its tragic epilogue of the 1990s the Marshal's pacification would be proven to have failed miserably. In Yugoslavia, therefore, the twin narratives of victimisation and resistance find their most complex texture, not least because they are informed by decades of Communist dictatorship, and by civil wars and ethnic cleansings, which reframed and entrenched opposite memories of the world war.

Thus, in each European nation, group memories coexisted and interacted within a narrative framework provided by a dominant national memory of World War Two. When scholars and commentators point to collective memory, it is usually to this dominant interpretation turned orthodoxy that they refer; although at times, particularly up to

1968, institutional memories of the war may have appeared to be all-encompassing and all-inclusive, they were never, throughout Europe, true collective memories of all citizens. We now know that, even when alternative memories were not manifest, suppressed by decree or by choice, by political or psychological opportunity, they persisted, almost as an act of resistance at times. Indeed, they often thrived, passed down the generations, benefiting from the political yet quintessentially personal nature of memory, which makes it hard to control, and by the very emphasis that authorities all over Europe put on World War Two as a watershed of national and international histories, which made it impossible to forget.

One European group, in particular, were often as isolated in their postwar memories as they had been in their wartime plight. Displaced European Jews returned to their old homes or arrived in their new ones only to find that they now held uncomfortable and unwelcome memories. In many countries, in the Communist East but also, for example, in Gaullist France, Jewish victims of the Nazis were stripped of their identities and commemorated as victims of Fascism: in France, the Auschwitz memorial at Père Lachaise cemetery was unveiled on 30 June 1946, as '180,000 Frenchmen women and children' were commemorated to the sound of the Marseillaise. As Annette Wieviorka has pointed out, the ambiguous phrasing, setting and choice of soundtrack in this commemoration spelt not inclusiveness but the simultaneous hijacking of Jewish victimhood by both Communist and nationalist memories of martyrdom.[22] This troubled beginning would later be completely overturned, after the 1961 trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem and especially from the 1970s onwards, as the Jewish specificity of the Holocaust in turn overshadowed other stories.

A separate point ought to be made for belligerent countries that did not experience capitulation, suffered no, or only partial, enemy occupation and emerged as victors from the conflict. In the USSR and Great Britain the recollection of loss and suffering could be tempered by a narrative of resilience and triumph. Partly framed in both cases by the desire to provide an alternative narrative to that of the USA, the awareness of having withstood alone the might and brutality of Germany's assault provided the backbone for these nations' memories of the conflict. Elsewhere in Europe, concepts of victimisation and martyrdom became the means either by which subjugation was overcome or by which aggression was redeemed; among the victorious powers, however, personal and collective sacrifice were utilised to explain how triumph was achieved. In Britain, popular resistance to the Blitz in 1940 became

the symbol of the country's resilience, while the People's War became a long-term feature of political discourse which still persists either as an anchor, in times of both crisis and jingoistic celebration, or as a by-gone stoicism of which to debate the loss. Certainly differences remained in British memories of the war, especially along political and class lines: Mark Connelly identifies wartime radicalism, and industrial and gender relations, as casualties of the unifying myth of the People's War.[23] Notwithstanding these silences, the memory rifts in post-1945 British society were marginal compared with the deep fractures that scarred other European nations. Even though the war brought about permanent social changes and an irreversible decline in global influence, British institutions were unhurt, or indeed strengthened, and Britain's dignity unshaken. So, traumatic though they were, Britain's experiences of World War Two and its postwar legacies – human loss, destruction, rationing and imperial dismantlement – cemented in popular imagination the discourse around the country's 'finest hour' and informed a shared and at times melancholic nostalgia: Britons could look back without fearing the questions of the past; they knew why they had fought and that they had won.

The postwar situation facing the former Axis powers was almost diametrically opposite. In May 1945, Germany's and Italy's immediate past abounded with questions too painful to answer: why did Fascism triumph in these countries? How popular was it? How could the nation have supported the dictators' disastrous wars and stained its national conscience forever with unspeakable war crimes? The result was that for many years these questions went not only unanswered but also largely unasked.

Amnesia was the cardinal ingredient of German and Italian memory. And, thanks also to this rigorous and unwavering effort, the defeated countries thrived, building new identities on a mixture of denial, selective remembering and invention, of a carefully managed historical legacy. Both countries embraced consumerism, capitalism and economic reconstruction, and both countries rescued aspects of the past, elements of national identity that preceded Fascism, such as Christianity and regional traditions. Opening the 1960 Olympic Games, Giulio Andreotti managed the Herculean feat of welcoming the world to a Fascist-built sporting complex, the Foro Italico – the neoclassical former Foro Mussolini, complete with fake Roman statues – and glorifying Italian history without ever mentioning Fascism. Addressing the crowd in Latin, he even recycled some of the regime's own imagery: Rome was the heir of the Roman Empire, the cradle of civilisation, the millenary

home of Christianity, in the context of which Mussolini's 20 years were insignificant.[24] Through such techniques, Germans and Italians turned weakness into strength: the demise of state institutions, the destruction of many physical and symbolic reminders of the Fascist and Nazi regimes, the overthrow of old certainties, the countless loss, all became catalysts not of introspection but of catharsis, and evidence in favour of acquittal, rather than condemnation.

Justice was not meted out consistently, but the symbolism of retribution was significant: Germany had the Nuremberg trial of 1945–46 and Italy had the macabre plebiscite of Piazzale Loreto, where the bloated corpses of Mussolini and his mistress Claretta Petacci were hung upside down and exposed to the people's scorn and fury. There were some prosecutions in Italy too, such as that of Rome's prefect Pietro Caruso in September 1944, but the desire to move on, and the need, both domestic and international, to ensure as smooth a transition as possible, prevented a systematic enquiry into the past. In Germany, the British and Americans had sponsored a comprehensive programme of renewal based on the punishment of war criminals, the purge of Nazi elements from the administration and the re-education of a population steeped in the hubris of Nazi propaganda. In 1945, British troops had marched the villagers of Belsen to the nearby concentration camp so that they could help in the task of burying the corpses there. They were faced with the consequences of their government's policies, which had remained hidden behind trees, walls and euphemism on one side and white-picket fences, lace curtains and complacency on the other. Shortly after the war, each occupying power had independently commissioned a documentary about German death camps in order to aid this re-education campaign, but the American film – which would later achieve fame because of Alfred Hitchcock's often overemphasised consulting role – would never be completed, and the British one would be completed only much later: already by 1946 the recycling of West Germany had become more important than its rehabilitation.[25] A similar process would take place in East Germany, where the Soviet purge had been much more brutal, but not for that reason immune to the recycling of personnel.

Mary Fulbrook has exhaustively surveyed the intricacy of the relationship between history and identity in post-1945 Germany, a relationship further complicated by the separation of the two Germanies.[26] The division of Germany, though undoubtedly a traumatic experience for all concerned, facilitated a shift in attention from the past to present and future in at least two ways. In the first instance, it gave some legitimacy to a narrative of popular victimisation which Germans had

already begun to construct. In the second instance, the country's separation cemented a sort of collective schizophrenia which was a cardinal element of Germany's repositioning: the idea of two chronological Germanies, one that existed until May 1945 and one that emerged later, the innocent offspring of a guilty womb, preceded the actual political creation of two political Germanies. Two Germanies created the possibility, seized vehemently in the East and more subtly in the West, of identifying in the other Germany the continuity with the past and in one's own country the rejection of that past. On the one hand, East Germans were encouraged to denounce the corrupt, capitalist West, with its failed purge and unresolved relationship with the Nazi legacy, where German industry survived almost unchanged; the identification between East Germans and communism automatically qualified them as anti-Fascist, for were the Communists not the reviled and persecuted enemies of Fascism, and was it not Communist Russia that had eventually repelled Hitler's assault? On the other hand, West Germans could point to the Communist East, a one-party autocracy and aggressive police state which looked suspiciously like Hitler's Reich.

The dichotomies between government and people and between past and present were also crucial elements in Italy's memory of World War Two. Presenting Mussolini's government as unpopular and distinct from the Italian people was the starting point of a path to collective salvation. This distinction passed primarily through the construction of two stereotypes: one of Italians as *brava gente*,[27] a good people fundamentally uninterested in war and immune to evil; the other of Italian Fascism as pompous and arrogant, but incompetent and fundamentally harmless. As we will examine closely in the chapters that follow, these two stereotypes may well be the homogenising exception in the tendency towards 'divided memories' that John Foot has exposed in the first comprehensive study of Italy's relationship between history, memory and forgetting.[28]

In the task of making a fresh start, Italians were helped by several other aspects of their wartime history. One such useful feature was Italy's appalling military record since 1940: the failure to make inroads against France, despite joining the assault in its very final stages; the humiliating defeat in Greece which forced Hitler to succour his ally; the disastrous Soviet campaign; the debacle at El Alamein. Accompanied by Mussolini's absurd boasting, these defeats, engineered by a baffling lack of preparation and a leadership wavering between the incompetent and the delusional, had won Italy the mockery of its enemies and the enmity of its friends. Yet in postwar Italy these failures were a silver

lining: reinterpreted as a symbol of an innate Italian aversion to warfare and violence, they spoke of a collective commitment to peace and of a healthy suspicion towards totalitarianism. The procrastination of Italian occupying forces faced with German requests to hand over Jews in the Balkans and Southern France, for instance, was interpreted for decades as evidence of just such a stubborn humanitarianism,[29] until Davide Rodogno exposed it as an exercise in self-aggrandisement and opportunism.[30]

The German ally itself became one of the chief tools of Italy's reinvention: whenever faced with any aspect of its past, be this domestic dictatorship or international campaign, military aggression or crime against humanity, any Italian could fall back on the standard rebuff that Mussolini was not as bad as Hitler and Fascism not as bad as Nazism. Italian attitudes towards the Holocaust provide an excellent example of this strategy: Germany's undisputed responsibility for the genocide conveniently served to play down the significance of Italy's own 1938 Racial Laws or the role that police and Fascist militias played in raids after 1943, not to mention suppress almost completely the memory of Italian racist crimes in Africa, where the sites of Italian killing overwhelmingly resided.[31] This moral relativism, easily disguised as contextualisation, or even as comparative history, would frame much popular and institutional discourse on Italy's Fascist past – not least, as we will we see, through the camera's lens – and garner many supporters abroad, where it genuinely seemed to fit both long-standing national stereotypes and actual experiences of conflict and occupation.

Finally, a moment in Italy's wartime history which would play a crucial role in its postwar memory was the monarchic coup against Mussolini in July 1943 and the subsequent armistice on 8 September of the same year. This repudiation of Fascism came too late to save the Italian King, Victor Emmanuel III, from the ire of his subjects, who would vote to establish the Republic and exile the royal family on 2 June 1946, but it did provide postwar Italy with an institutional and political legitimacy. What followed Italy's defection from the Axis represented, for tens of millions of Italians, the worst 18 months of the war: the country turned into a battlefield, civil war, bombardments, the brutal German occupation of the peninsula's Centre-North. But the political coordination by the *Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale* (National Committee of Liberation, CLN) and the military role played by the Italian partisans ensured that Italy would end the war with renewed dignity and escape the worst of postwar retribution.

The Resistance movements that fought Fascist and German troops in Central and Northern Italy from September 1943 to April 1945 would be transformed, in the postwar years, into the foundations of the Italian Republic, a 'civic religion', as Gundle has called it, which went far beyond the Resistance's historical and political significance. Not least given the fiercely contested and intensely political meanings attached to this period in postwar Italian debates – a matter at the heart of this book – it is worth stating here that Republican Italy's political and moral legitimacy, based largely on the Resistance, was neither a narrative construction nor merely an exercise in collective opportunism. It was earned on the ground with countless individual choices harnessed by a finally united anti-Fascist front genuinely committed to democracy. Nevertheless, there is now little doubt that the experiences of post-armistice Italy were used in different ways to dilute 20 years of Fascism, conceal the worst of its crimes and deflect the nation's responsibility for them.

This brief exploration of European memories of World War Two has highlighted how diverse the processes of memory-formation have been. In each national context, past experiences, political considerations and the reality on the ground informed a plurality of narratives. However, alongside the national peculiarities of European memories, it is also evident that some broader trends exist. The first such tendency lies in the plurality of memory: although some memories were more visible, achieving dominance by virtue of their inclusiveness or by legitimacy bestowed by the state's cultural and political institutions, counter-memories existed everywhere, whether among groups with a strong and distinct identity corresponding to a separate experience of the war or among the humiliated but nevertheless nostalgic remnants of the defeated. Hence, it is legitimate to question the very existence of a collective memory, although some dominant narratives of the war may have been so pervasive, persistent and persuasive as to warrant the use of a concept as ambiguous as it is useful.

The second connection is the political nature of historical memory. As soon as they are removed from the individual sphere and the specificity of the remembered event, all memories become constructions which aim to allocate meaning to history, not to recount it. Therefore, history itself, not only its remembrance, is affected: as Henri Rousso has recently put it, European 'conflicts of memory should alert us to the illusion that a homogeneous history of the Second World War is possible.'[32] In turn, the presentist political nature of commemoration ensured that in postwar Europe all constructed memories were, to a degree, selective,

regardless of whether one considers official, state-sanctioned memories of the war or the unofficial memories of specific social, political, religious or ethnic groups.

The third recurrent trend in European memories of World War Two lies in the selection of experiences of victimisation, sacrifice and resilience over those of aggression, capitulation and collaboration. Perhaps with the exception of Britain, and certainly with a wide variety of dynamics and justifications, most belligerent nations reinvented themselves after 1945 through the use of traumatic wartime experiences: narratives of victimhood made nations united where they had been divided, victorious where they had been defeated, martyr where they had been aggressor, anti-Fascist where they had been Fascist.

Alongside the careful selection of the facts, the most common technique in pursuing such catharses has been to create an artificial distinction between government and people. This separation took a two-pronged approach: first, it exploited a populist detachment from politicians to undermine unsavoury wartime governments; then, it engaged this new-found popular sovereignty to reinvest postwar governments with legitimacy and repair the fracture between institutions and public. This timer-controlled disillusionment often allowed a smoother transition, ensured the preservation of positive aspects of the past and the jettisoning of negative ones, and fostered uplifting and inclusive narratives which were instrumental in European reconstruction and pacification.

Finally, as Paul Ricoeur has most eminently discussed,[33] continental memories of the war were – are – constructed through both remembrance and amnesia. Whether driven by traumatic repression or by a deliberate political design, these narratives of the past are partial and selective even when, as historical memories go, they are accurate and useful. When Nora coined the inspired *lieu de mémoire* he neglected its complement, the *lieu d'amnésie* (realm of amnesia), or '*non-lieu de mémoire*',[34] which inhabits each site of memory. Nora's own book, with its telling glossing over the Algerian war, epitomises the symbiotic relationship between remembering and forgetting that is innate in the selection process and that consequently haunts every commemoration, every monument, every street name ever dedicated to World War Two.

And every film ever made about it. In the choices that construct each text, artistic or commercial, narrative or stylistic, political or historiographical, cinema reveals amnesia as the shadow of remembrance, while in the magical darkness of the movie theatres countless *lieux de mémoire* and *lieux d'amnésie* are simultaneously created by the individual

connections that accord meaning to the moving image. This book is interested in cinema in its role as mediator between history, memory and politics, a mediation process whose subjective elements can frustrate the historian but whose popular appeal, ability to generate debate and adaptability hold the promise of unexpected rewards.

The chapters that follow focus on the role that cinema has played in the evolution and transmission of Italy's memories of what Richard Bosworth has called the long Second World War,[35] which in Italy surely began with the Fascist takeover of power in 1922 and ended on 25 April 1945, if not a little later: the referendum of 2 June 1946, the first elections of 18 April 1948 or Antonio Pallante's attempted assassination of the Communist leader Palmiro Togliatti on 14 July 1948 would all make excellent bookends to Italy's war. However, this book does not have the ambition of surveying all cinema about Fascism, a task that Maurizio Zinni has partly achieved by admirably reviewing 140 films,[36] but rather wishes to interrogate specifically the history of the representation of Fascist Italy and Fascists. Some films will thus lose out, especially the Resistance films that form almost a separate genre, while others will receive more attention than they ever have. Tracing the history of cinema's representation of Fascist Italy through four broad periods – 'Resistance', 'Reconstruction', 'Revolution' and 'Revisionism' – the book follows a thread that filmmakers, producers and audiences (that is, Italians) have themselves laid down: namely, the unwillingness to split a discussion of the Fascist past from an overall interpretation of Italian national character, and the consequent reliance on the *italiani brava gente* myth, arguably the common denominator that links these four periods.

In carrying out its analysis of broad trends and individual case studies, the book investigates and exploits the dual role which governs the intricate relationship between film, history and memory, where cinema works as both mirror and catalyst of popular perceptions of the past. Historical films, through their ability to engage individually with past and present and yet simultaneously mediate between both, provide an invaluable body of evidence for the historian of historical memory. They offer us access to the selective nature of memory and its public uses, particularly widespread in the construction of national narratives and identities.

Among the many sources employed by historians of memory in the last 25 years, monuments have been particularly privileged. Their marmoreal finality reflects an evidential solidity which comforts historians trained to deal with actions rather than texts. Although they

are themselves multi-layered cultural texts, plaques, memorials and cenotaphs share traceable political roots and a manifest social role which invest them with a degree of accountability. In this sense at least, cinema is a less reliable source. It is certainly informed by the commercial needs of producers and the artistic aspirations of authors, accompanied by distributing and marketing processes and reliant on the kindliness of censors. Nevertheless, compared with other forms of memory-formation, cinema has some unique features to offer, particularly in regard to its visibility, durable popular reach and visual force.

In studying cinema's role in the construction of memory, this book contends that cinema's weaknesses as a source are also its strengths: a film's historical inaccuracy can be the manifestation of a country's self-representation and a symptom of its taboos; a film's nature as commercial product, to be marketed and consumed, can provide a further insight into acceptable and unacceptable aspects of a given past, especially if the text is compounded by qualitative and quantitative analysis of a film's reception. This approach to cinema, which Robert Rosenstone has perhaps unsatisfactorily named 'the explicit approach',[37] does not engage with historical cinema primarily as interpretation of the past, but some historians, starting with Rosenstone himself, have indeed celebrated cinema's ability to enact a connection between past and present through its narrative and visual prerogatives.[38] This is an approach that Rosenstone calls 'implicit' and that Hayden White has called 'historiophoty',[39] equating the narrative and interpretative skills of the moving image and of historiography.

The main problem with 'historiophoty', however, is that its argument works only for some, particularly enlightened, films. In order to exploit cinema as a source in the study of memory, a film must instead be analysed in its connection with both past and present. Two parallel analyses are therefore necessary: one, of the film's representation of the past; the other, of the same film's relationship with the period in which it was produced. The dichotomy between 'explicit' and 'implicit' approaches is both unnecessary and counterproductive.

Studied in this way, historical cinema challenges the perception that memory and its corollaries – forgetting and silence – are primarily about the remembrance of the past, and, indeed, demonstrates that they pertain at least as much to the present as they do to the past. As the chapters that follow will show, postwar Italian films about Fascism have invariably been informed by what surrounded them: the social and political context of their time; the beliefs of their authors;

the hunches of canny producers; the forecast moods of prospective spectators; the actual responses of real audiences. From the desperate resolve of neorealism to the bloated mediocrity of Berlusconian revisionist melodramas, Italian cinema about Fascism has both reflected and shaped popular perceptions of that past. It has reinforced or challenged stereotypes, apportioned disparate meanings to the past, remembered selectively and silently forgotten the most shameful pages of Italy's history.

2
The Blood of the Defeated

In analysing Italy's memories of the long Second World War it is appropriate to start at the end, when the plurality of these memories finally came to the fore of a political discourse long dominated by the narratives of Resistance and victimhood discussed in the previous chapter. 'The end' is, of course, too absolute a claim for any history book: it is only an artificial marker of a chronological narrative. Yet this book begins in the contemporary period, before plunging back in a long flashback and tracing its subject back to the present. Maybe the researcher is beginning to resemble his sources, yet this narrative structure is arbitrary but not random. As this chapter will demonstrate, the resurgence of the right and the consequent attempt at a broad-brushed revision of Italy's Fascist history raises specific questions about the nation's memories of its past. These are not only problems around the coexistence of opposite interpretations of the Fascist era or the repression of certain narratives, but also more structural questions raised by the way these contemporary debates have manifested themselves in popular culture: how selective have revisionist efforts been, and why? Has the politicised nature of Italian memory debates compromised them from the outset? Has the left–right contraposition prevented a thorough examination of the nation's history and memory, and has it thus become a shared alibi to avoid any discussion of the darkest pages of Italy's history? Starting at 'the end', such as it is, helps us set out these questions; however, only going back in time will allow us to answer them satisfactorily, because the answer requires an analysis of the common denominators, those aspects that have been consistently remembered or consistently repressed.

The seeds of some of these questions germinated in Luciano Violante's inaugural speech as Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies on 9 May 1996.

> Unlike many other European countries, we do not yet possess shared national values. The two great moments of our national history, the Risorgimento and the Resistance, have involved only part of the country and only some of its political traditions. For a variety of reasons, those who came out defeated from these events, but also sections of the winning side, in the mid-19th C. as much as a century later, have been able to hinder their innovative potential and national dimension. The image of the Risorgimento that prevails today is an oleographic one stripped of the deep values that inspired that movement. The Resistance and the war of liberation run the same risk and, on top of that, do not yet belong to the collective memory of Republican Italy. I ask myself, colleagues, I humbly ask myself how those Italians who believe in and wish to protect those beliefs and strengthen their universal value, as a struggle against tyranny and as the emancipation of peoples, can heal past fractures and ensure that the fight against Nazi-Fascism will become a truly shared national sentiment. I ask myself if today's Italy should begin to reflect upon yesterday's defeated; not because they were right or because we should accept a convenient equation between the two sides, but because we must make the effort to understand, without misleading revisionisms, the reasons why thousands of boys and especially girls joined Salò when all was lost.
>
> (Applause from the Chamber)[1]

When the MP and former investigative judge delivered it, his centre–left coalition had just won its first general election convincingly and former Communist politicians had been sworn in as ministers of internal affairs and justice, definitively ending the *conventio ad excludendum* against the *Partito Comunista Italiano* (Italian Communist Party, PCI) that had characterised Italy since 1947. Perhaps inspired by a climate of intense expectation, Violante asked the nation to ponder why, 50 years earlier, thousands of young Italians, after Italy's collapse and the armistice of 8 September 1943, had decided to fight for the Republic of Salò, even as it became evident that its cause was doomed. While cautioning against a wholesale revision of history or attributing moral equivalence to both sides, Violante called for an acknowledgement of those Italians as a necessary step towards achieving a national reconciliation that had been prevented by the refusal to consider the war of liberation a civil war.

A noble speech, the Speaker's words nevertheless placed on the political and cultural agenda an item over which the left had already lost

control. The 1990s in Italy had seen the *Tangentopoli* (Bribesville) corruption scandal that dealt the *coup de grace* to a political status quo already tarnished by incompetence and made redundant by the end of the Cold War. The corruption scandals demolished the *Democrazia Cristiana* (Christian Democrats, DC) who had dominated Parliament and government since 1948, and all their historical coalition partners, including the Socialist Party (PSI). The resulting power vacuum was filled with astonishing efficiency by Silvio Berlusconi, whose 1994 surprise election triumph was built on his ability to mediate two contradictory coalitions: one with the secessionist and racist *Lega Nord* (Northern League) in Northern Italian constituencies; the other, in the South, with the nationalist *Alleanza Nazionale* (National Alliance, AN), the latest incarnation of Italy's Fascist right, with whom no mainstream party had flirted since 1960. Under the leadership of Gianfranco Fini, in 1995, AN hurriedly dismissed its Fascist legacy, embracing economic liberalism and dropping the anti-Americanism that had characterised its predecessor, the *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (Italian Social Movement, MSI). Berlusconi's 1994 coalition would not last long – it dissolved among infighting in January 1995 – but it indelibly altered Italian politics by reinventing the extreme right as an acceptable government force.

Inevitably, the return to power of the right after decades of isolation at the margins of the parliamentary hemicycle also revolutionised Italy's discourses around its past. Yet the Berlusconian challenge to the orthodox anti-Fascist narrative of Italy's past was twofold: on the one hand, he embraced the post-Fascist right, simultaneously playing down Mussolini's dictatorship, especially in relation to Hitler's; on the other hand, he sought to establish an equation between Fascism and Communism, emphasising both Communist crimes globally and the relationship between Italian Marxists and Communist dictatorships in the former Soviet Union and elsewhere. Thus, Berlusconi's dismissal of the Fascist practice of sending political opponents and homosexuals to internal exile as a 'holiday camp',[2] or his grateful acknowledgement of crowds' rhythmic chanting of 'Duce, Duce',[3] are complementary, not contradictory, to his homage to the Resistance at Onna in 2009,[4] just as his outrageous comments on Chinese Communists' 'cannibalism', in 2006,[5] went hand-in-hand with his remark to German Socialist European MP Martin Schultz, in 2003, about casting him as a *kapo* in a Holocaust film.[6]

With respect to Italy's past, as in most of his populist politics, Berlusconi invented little, but rather made excellent use of elements already present in Italy's political and cultural discourse:

anti-Communism had been the staple diet of Christian Democratic rhetoric for decades, and Nazi Germany had long been the ideal reference point of Italy's collective postwar acquittal from its Fascist past, even making its way into the work of influential conservative historians such as Renzo De Felice. Berlusconi's revisionism was thus a simple and dishonest exercise, but also a complex Italian variation on the rhetoric of Francis Fukuyama's 'end of history' and the global neoliberal turn initiated by the Eastern bloc's collapse.[7] In Italy, where the cultural and memory discourses had been highly politicised well before Berlusconi or Fukuyama, the allegedly bipartisan call for an 'apolitical' revision of the country's twentieth century would, rather, result in a settling of old scores, the revenge of right-wing intellectuals who had felt marginalised by the presumed cultural and moral supremacy of the left. Thus, Violante's plea for introspection sought demystification and reconciliation but achieved just the mix of cheap revisionism, slander and political apathy that Violante had wished to avoid, framed on one side by a resurgent right and on the other by a left gripped in an endless search for identity that often amounted to little more than self-flagellation, failing either to reclaim a noble past or to build a significant present.

The anti-anti-Fascist rhetoric of Berlusconian Italy, evident both in popular culture and in historiography, and in crossover works like those of journalist Giampaolo Pansa, exploited especially the centrepiece of Violante's speech: the personal dignity and political legitimacy of *i vinti*, the defeated. '*I vinti*' has thus become a byword to explain everything from the call for reconciliation to electoral propaganda, from the attempt to answer genuine historical questions to the exploitation of the past for purely contemporary calculations. '*I vinti di ieri*', 'yesterday's defeated', as Violante put it in 1996, or *i ragazzi di Salò*, the youths of Salò, as they are now referred to with overwhelming regularity and disturbing harmony, was a category meant to define a generation whose ideals were defeated, revealed to be violent and inhumane, morally bankrupt and reactionary, but whose experiences nevertheless deserve pity, regardless of their guilt. This chapter will argue that, in the age of reality TV, old-fashioned historical melodramas contributed to translate a call for bipartisan pity into a demand to recognise commitment, national pride, family values, sacrifice and innocence as shared conservative values of Fascist Italians.

Unsurprisingly, film, with its immediacy, its simple and recognisable language, its narrative ability to be both specific and universal, immediately captured both the importance and the political potential of the

new discourse on the defeated of World War Two. Cinema and television have hence played a major part in the historical definition and characterisation of the defeated. Moreover, films have mediated between the historical and the political, past and present, to locate 'yesterday's defeated' ideologically in today's Italy. This chapter probes the relationship between recent historical films and political revisionism, and questions how revisionist they really are: have they addressed lesser-known aspects of Italy's long Second World War? Have they challenged the dominant historical interpretation of Italy under Mussolini? Have they sought to illustrate previously repressed perspectives? Focusing in particular on state-owned RAI's role in producing and distributing revisionist films, the chapter will analyse three films that, while generating popular debate or securing large popular audiences on television, have attracted little or no scholarly attention: first, *Porzûs* (Renzo Martinelli, 1997), an anti-Communist tirade produced by RAI and then never broadcast, and only released for the home video market in 2010; second, *Il Cuore nel Pozzo* (Alberto Negrin, 2005), commissioned to celebrate the first memorial day for Italian victims in Yugoslavia and presented to the public not by RAI, the film's producers, but by *Alleanza Nazionale*'s post-Fascist telecommunications minister Maurizio Gasparri; and, third, *Il Sangue dei Vinti* (Michele Soavi, 2008), a melodramatic pastiche with vague ambitions of bipartisanship that disappointed even its right-wing sponsors but nevertheless commanded an audience of over 5,000,000 television viewers.

The first film to capture the broader political trend of historical revision was Renzo Martinelli's *Porzûs* (1997). Though gloss and gore leave little space for history in Martinelli's film, *Porzûs* is reasonably thorough in setting out the historical elements of the massacre at Porzûs, recounting the events surrounding the brutal murder of 20 Catholic partisans of the Osoppo brigade at the hands of Communist Resistance fighters in the North-Eastern region of Friuli. The massacre of Porzûs needs to be understood in the context of the war's final months at Italy's North-Eastern border, where the civil war between Fascists and anti-Fascists was at its fiercest and where intra-Resistance tensions between communists and non-Communist factions were exacerbated by the aggressive proximity of Tito's Yugoslav forces and by the long history of Italian racism towards Slavs. Given the intense confusion over the postwar fate of Trieste and the collapse of relations between the Western Allies and the USSR, the massacre belongs as much to the realm of postwar politics as to that of the Italian war of liberation. On the one hand, the Communists suspected the Catholic partisans of conspiring with the

Fascists against them; on the other, the Catholic partisans suspected the Communists of plotting with Tito for a Yugoslav annexation of Trieste.[8]

Martinelli constructs a familiar narrative palimpsest around the encounter in modern-day Slovenia of the two partisan leaders, Geko, the Communist murderer, and Storno, the Catholic survivor seeking revenge. Storno seeks closure and revenge but will settle for the former, judging from an early execution scene that is so naïve and self-indulgent it barely needs revealing as imaginary. Slow-motion gun-drawing and cheap splatter over, the film plunges into even less plausible flashbacks of a 1945 populated by brooding male models, innocent maidens and other assorted stereotypes, as the old men reminisce about the bad old days that are, in fact, also the good old days, when life was exciting and youthful dreams had yet to be shattered. Only in this rather shallow sense of middle-class disillusionment are Storno and Geko to be considered 'defeated', as Martinelli and some commentators have put it.

> Will Storno-Centina's gun shoot? We do not know. What we do know is that the two elderly men are both defeated. Geko-Giacca has lost because the Communist revolution in which he believed did not occur. While Storno-Centina realises that history has proceeded faster than he has, and what does he have left now?[9]

Rhetoric aside, however, the heroes and anti-heroes of *Porzûs*, both in their 'young and beautiful' and in their older incarnations,[10] are in fact winners: they are both anti-Fascist, and therefore their objective of liberating Italy was achieved. In Storno's case, he was also successful in his further political aims of preventing a Communist hegemony in Friuli Venezia Giulia and, on a personal level, the character appears to celebrate a full and rewarding personal and professional life.

The only loser in *Porzûs* is the Communist character Spaccaossi (Bonecruncher), who chooses to sacrifice his life alongside the Catholic partisans of the Osoppo brigade rather than carry out his leader's murderous orders. Whereas the *Osovani* are innocent victims but cannot be considered defeated, Spaccaossi's character loses everything, including his faith in the Communist cause. This is perhaps where Martinelli's film deserves the attacks it received from much left-wing press[11]: it attempts to assimilate the position of the PCI to that of the cowardly and calculating commissar, an imaginary character sent from Rome to whitewash the massacre, rather than to the comradely and patriotic commitment of Spaccaossi. In that respect the outraged response of the Catholic weekly *Famiglia Cristiana* at the 'basic ambiguity which would

exonerate the PCI through the character of Spaccaossi'[12] seems to be not only ahistorical but also misplaced. In Martinelli's film, Spaccaossi's noble martyrdom is not the reflection of the PCI's support for the CLN and realist commitment to the development of a liberal democracy in Italy, but, rather, takes on the opposite function: it is a lesson of morality to the Italian left, accused here of murder and treason. To complete the subtle positioning of his film, Martinelli neither denies nor confirms explicitly the alleged contacts between the Osoppo leaders and the Nazi–Fascist command, but clearly allows this ambiguity to imply their innocence, as well as that of the alleged spy.

The absence of Fascists in a film that proudly claimed its revisionist intentions is both telling and baffling. 'Yesterday's defeated', the Fascists and *repubblichini* that Violante had spared a thought for, are nowhere to be seen, drowned out in the tacky bloodbath that Martinelli defined as 'history-spectacle'.[13] Their stark absence, in an area where the guerrilla fighting was at its harshest, can hardly be explained by the film's focus on the internecine anti-Fascist struggle, simply because the Fascists are central not only to the Civil War but also to the very event in question, since the *Osovani* were accused of conspiring with them. Rather, leaving the *repubblichini* at the margins helps the anti-Communist politics of the film, establishing an ambiguous but broadly appealing camp of all those patriots who were not prepared to concede Trieste to the Yugoslavs and all those democrats who opposed the establishment of a Communist dictatorship in Italy.

This reinvents Italian patriots, including the Fascists, as moderate conservatives. It is in this operation of political repositioning that Martinelli's film is pernicious – or revisionist in the meaning used by the Italian left – not in splashing on the front page an episode of the history of the Resistance that might have embarrassed the left.[14] Although implicit, this ecumenical welcoming of the Fascist right into moderate conservatism is conveyed strongly by three elements: first, the fact that, unlike the *repubblichini*, the Germans do appear and are clearly identified as the common enemy; second, the fact that Facciasmorta (Sallowface), the only character explicitly identified as a member of the local Fascist elite and executed by the Communist partisans, is himself no fanatic of the regime, but, rather, an inane family man whose token presence does little more than reiterate the sadistic fervour of his assassins; third, the fact that the ideology of the Italian Communists, laid on the broad but scarcely representative shoulders of Giacca's cartoon villain, is repeatedly summed up in the film as an evil plan to take over the world, shedding as much bourgeois blood as possible in the process.

Framed by the issues of readdressing the Resistance-centred narrative of the war and the reclaiming of forgotten or untold stories, *Porzûs* is both the first example of revisionist filmography and the immediate reminder of the complexities of these efforts. *Porzûs* exemplifies the difficulty in defining the ambiguous but otherwise interesting concept of the defeated. On the one hand, Violante's empathy and intellectual curiosity had been directed at a particular group of *repubblichini*, young men and women who joined a lost cause in its final moments: despicable though the cause was, in an Italy ridden with conformism, that choice equated not so much to jumping off the bandwagon as to lying across its path. On the other hand, Martinelli's red-baiting has little to do with understanding and reconciliation. Far from critically acknowledging the civil war, *Porzûs* exploits a criminal act to isolate and falsify the conflict internal to the Resistance and thus recycle all Fascists, not by understanding their motivations but by ignoring them. In regard to this political effort, Italians have often used the splendid verb *sdoganare*, which literally means clearing customs, yet there are two ways to pass the border: to declare and pay a duty or to conceal and hope for the best. Martinelli's strategy is to declare one item, the Resistance's internecine tensions, and to conceal another, more malignant one: Fascist Italy.

Much of Martinelli's right-wing posturing needs to be contextualised in the contemporary politics of memory rather than in relation to the events of 1945. This is a context that has recently attracted scholarly attention from Richard Bosworth, John Foot and Angelo Del Boca, who have led the belated study of Italy's historical memories. Bosworth, in the 1999 book he co-edited with Patrizia Dogliani and in much subsequent work, has navigated expertly the immobile rapids of Italy's political readings of history, furiously and sometimes violently contested and yet immovable in their respective certainties, in historiography and popular culture as well as politics.[15] Foot analysed the coexistence of diametrically opposed memories, intended as recollection of basic historical facts and not only of their significance, and argued that the Italian anomaly was not in the plurality of its narratives but, rather, in their pursuit of institutional legitimacy: these 'divided memories' remain independent of history and yet seek to shape historical perceptions.[16] And Del Boca, who with *Italiani Brava Gente* had already exposed much of Italy's amnesia, especially around its colonial crimes,[17] organised an apt response to the contemporary historiographical and political revision of Italy's Fascist period in an effort that is accurate and sensitive, but also an integral part of that same political debate over history and its present uses.[18]

In the absence of the Soviet scarecrow so ably utilised by the Christian Democrats since 1948, part of the neoconservative, Berlusconian anti-Communist narrative revolved around two central points: first, that the PCI was a Stalinist formation which had threatened democracy in Italy, rather than contributing to its formation and protection; and, second, that the PCI, despite never governing Italy after 1947, was the hegemonic power of the second half of the twentieth century. Martinelli's film amply fulfils the first aim by demonising the Communists and their ideology. Simultaneously, by representing the Communist partisans as winners, he exploits the trite rhetoric that suggests that the winners write the history books to argue that the PCI has controlled postwar memory through a concoction of fabrications, omissions, false emphases and silences.[19]

Paradoxically, however, it was Martinelli's own rigid right-wing message that disqualified his film from providing revisionist politics with a usable past. While his choice of topic and its anti-Communist, anti-ideological treatment fitted well the rhetoric of the right, Martinelli did not take into account several considerations. First, Berlusconian anti-Communism since 1994 was not constant. Rather, it was utilised as the need arose, unleashed in electoral propaganda and times of crisis but reined in at opportune times. Second, RAI, which partially funded the film and still owns its terrestrial broadcasting rights, is state-owned and controlled by a committee reflecting the composition of Italy's Parliament. While its independence remains a chimera and its relationship with the political parties symbiotic, RAI has survived regular changes of leadership by treading a careful line between majority and opposition, and therefore was always unlikely to support a divisive historical narrative deemed too factious or biased.

Thus, RAI bought the distribution rights to *Porzûs* only to refuse either to screen it on television or to distribute it for the home video market, which it only reached in 2010. If only in its decade-long wait for release, *Porzûs* is reminiscent of Marcel Ophuls's *Le Chagrin et la Pitié* (*The Sorrow and the Pity*, 1971), which between 1971 and 1981 waited to be screened by *Office de Radiodiffusion Télévision Française* (ORTF), the French Radio and Television Broadcasting Agency in what Ophuls described as 'censorship by inertia'.[20] RAI's boycott demands some explanation: first, it flew in the face of the interesting and worthwhile debate the film had generated in the press, including a one-page spread in the PCI's daily newspaper *L'Unità* featuring interviews with Martinelli[21] and the real-life partisans Giacca (Mario Toffanin) and Vanni (Giovanni Padoan), who had been found guilty of ordering the

massacre in 1954[22]; second, between 1997 and 2012 there were sufficient changes in administration – of both RAI and the state – to exclude a party-political boycott of the film; third, this was not a conspiracy of silence, because, although Porzûs may indeed have been 'confined to the limbo of forbidden things',[23] it had also been addressed judicially and, in part, historically.[24] Furthermore, the eminent Italian intellectual Pier Paolo Pasolini, whose brother Guido had been among the murdered, remembered the events in 1945 in a letter that was reprinted in *Il Corriere della Sera* during the controversy around the film.[25]

Instead, the most likely reason for RAI's effective boycott, and the much-delayed release on DVD, is that the film was controversial, aggressive and partial, as well as mediocre.[26] Indeed, *Porzûs* might well be the least revisionist and the most partial of the revisionist films of the last 15 years, but RAI may have struggled with the film's militant but honest choice of subject, and reasoned that the television public prefers stories of human resilience to tragedies without redemption. In the end, Martinelli's forced and partial representation of the Resistance as riddled with divisions could not serve any purpose: despite its inclusion in the 1998 Venice Film Festival, it failed to attract a political sponsor more powerful than the extreme neofascist right, who screened it at their summer festivals.

In its ambition to interpret the new history of World War Two, *Porzûs* could not compete, for example, with Alberto Negrin's *Il Cuore nel Pozzo* (2005), which became the nascent right's standard bearer, and perhaps the only film of the revisionist wave to obtain wholehearted institutional and public recognition. RAI commissioned this new two-part *fiction*, as Italians call films made explicitly for television, as the focal point of the state broadcaster's palimpsest to observe the first day of remembrance for the victims of the *foibe*, 11 February 2005. Strongly championed by AN, which had inherited the issue from the MSI, the annual Memorial Day was sanctioned by the Berlusconi government in 2004 to commemorate those Italians who had been expelled from Yugoslavia and massacred by Tito's partisans in the immediate aftermath of World War Two. Martinelli would later lament that RAI passed the opportunity to show *Porzûs* on that occasion, although just how his film related to the *foibe*, other than by geographical proximity, is unclear. Martinelli's comment revealed 11 February for what many on the right considered it to be: more than a commemoration, a chance to settle scores. The annual Memorial Day for victims of the *foibe* was, at least in part, a politicised act aimed at equating the crimes of the Communists to those of the Nazis and Fascists, and thus a direct response to

the Holocaust Memorial Day (27 January) that had been sanctioned by the centre–left coalition in 2000. In fact, within the topical limits dictated by the official commemoration, RAI's move was careful and wisely guided: it commissioned the new film from Alberto Negrin, a veteran TV director who in 2001 had directed *Perlasca: un Eroe Italiano*, another RAI production commissioned to celebrate Holocaust Memorial Day.[27] The irony of RAI's *par condicio* in this respect (commissioning the same form of commemoration – a two-part mini-series – and even from the same director) is further proof of the political nature of the *foibe*'s official commemoration, but also of RAI's extreme political caution, already witnessed in the case of *Porzûs*. Negrin was a safe option: with *Perlasca*, he had already demonstrated not only an appropriate command of the genre but also a fine political sensitivity based on privileging the personal over the political and emotion over ideology. With Giorgio Perlasca's story, Italians once again were allowed to confront their role in the Holocaust from a partial and reassuring perspective in which German brutality represented a familiar counterpoint. Yet, more importantly, Perlasca was an ideal hero for Berlusconian Italy: he was conservative and middle-class, close to the MSI after the war; better still, he was an official of the state, a Fascist veteran of Ethiopia and Spain, but also – as a rescuer of Jews celebrated at Israel's Yad Vashem Museum – a hero of untarnished credentials. Perlasca thus suited everyone, carrying the patriotic and political qualities in favour with the right but also the anti-Fascist virtues inextricably linked with opposing the Holocaust.

For all Negrin's seeming neutrality, however, there was more potential for political controversy in filming *Il Cuore nel Pozzo* than there had been in *Perlasca*, not least because of the careful scrutiny of the Slovenian, Croatian and Serb governments, all of whom were likely to take issue with the representation of the Yugoslav partisans. International diplomacy aside, the very subject matter of the film had long become politicised as a stalwart of the extreme right, in large part thanks to Italy's historical unwillingness to address it. This was more than just the PCI's embarrassment in acknowledging their Yugoslav comrades' murder of civilians and the party's own subsequent silence. For postwar Italian governments, to address the *foibe* would have meant dealing with the reasons for the presence of Italian civilians and military personnel in Yugoslavia in the first place. It would have become necessary to acknowledge Italian expansionism in the area, the rhetoric of disdain for the 'barbarous' Slavs, Fascist ethnic policies in the North-East of Italy and in occupied territories, and the brutality of Italian troops, especially in anti-partisan warfare.

These are exactly the elements that are lost in Negrin's tear-jerking melodrama, which follows the young son of a middle-class Italian family on the Istrian coast. The child, Francesco, witnesses the murder of his parents and, just in case the audience fails to note the extent of the trauma, he descends into the well of the film's title to find his parents' dead bodies. Orphaned, he is left with Carlo, the half-Italian son of the evil partisan leader Novak, whose twin obsessions with murdering innocent Italians and reclaiming his paternal rights appear to leave the child little chance. With his new stepbrother and a host of other orphans, however, the young boy is led to safety by none other than a priest, Don Bruno, Ettore, a demobilised soldier, and his blonde, Yugoslav girlfriend, Anja, a gendered representation of Italy's Slovenian minority which presumably was supposed to protect the film from the (deserved) accusation of racist stereotyping. The film ends with the Italian survivors safely across the border, where they will settle into a surreal exile at home to deal, presumably, with their traumas and the general Italian indifference towards them. Suddenly turning to black and white, the film's final sequence is meant to be documentaristic (and therefore 'real'?), only to be contaminated by Ettore's arrival: this final intrusion and counter-intrusion of the fictional and the historical best epitomises Negrin's tawdry balancing act.

Any critique of the narrative banalities and stylistic mediocrities of *Porzûs* can equally be applied to *Il Cuore nel Pozzo*. Although Negrin does not seek out blood and guts, his film's melodramatic and rhetorical aura at least matches Martinelli's in vulgarity. Artistically, this is little more than a soap opera that makes its contemporaries seem like cinematic masterpieces. And yet, Negrin's film was watched by over 10,000,000 viewers, a share of 36.66% on the night, rising to 44% towards the film's end when it reached a peak of 17,251,000 spectators.[28] As for *Porzûs*, then, it is necessary to look beyond aesthetic and narrative questions, not only because *Il Cuore nel Pozzo*'s popularity unequivocally qualifies this writer's opinion as a minority view, but also because the film has much to say that a straightforward scholarly analysis of the text would fail to grasp.

Historically and politically, *Il Cuore nel Pozzo* was indeed a wasted opportunity, not because it passed on the chance to denounce Communist crimes, as Martinelli and no doubt others would have liked,[29] but, rather, because it failed to speak candidly and critically about this tragic page in Italian history. Displacement and destruction are evident here, and there is no doubting Negrin's empathy with the victims. However, his film reduces ethnic cleansing against Italians to a matter of

personal revenge, with comic book baddies seeking to steal their children or quench their thirst for blood. It is possible that Negrin came to this result in an effort to tell a history of ordinary people, stripped of politics and ideology, but it is more likely that the film's personalisation of history represents an impossible balancing act in which ignoring historical context is the most political of choices.

Il Cuore nel Pozzo does nothing to contextualise the Italian presence in Yugoslavia. It is true that the film acknowledges from the very beginning the discrimination against the Slavic population, thus justifying in part its desire for retribution, but it also qualifies this not as a demand for justice but as the basest thirst for revenge. The uneven emphasis on the events and the diametrically opposed characterisation of ethnic Italians and Yugoslavs leaves the viewer in little doubt as to where responsibilities lie and how disproportionate the Yugoslav retaliation was. The discrimination lamented by the Yugoslavs in the film is limited to a linguistic and professional one, but their response is pillage, rape and attempted genocide. There is no mention at all in the film of Italian ethnic cleansing, support for Ustaša brutality or Italy's own crimes in its anti-guerrilla tactics in Yugoslavia, which Davide Rodogno finally chronicled in 2003.[30] Nor can such silence be explained by irrelevance to the story being told, as the relevance of territorial disputes, of Balkan domestic and ethnic politics and of the cycle of brutalisation is plain to see in the context of the *foibe* massacres.

Historical Italian innocence is strongly reinforced in the film by the naivety with which the Italians respond to their own victimisation. Italians appear not to be a foreign force four years into the occupation and brutalisation of Yugoslav soil, but a kind and peace-loving people suddenly under attack by previously downtrodden and now arrogant neighbours. Furthermore, by using a conversation between a doctor and a teacher to acknowledge past discrimination against the Yugoslavs, Negrin actually paints a picture of a civilising mission reminiscent of colonial representations, and attaches to the Yugoslavs the epithet of ungrateful savages who lash out at their saviours. The difference in behaviour and overall demeanour is so marked as to indicate an innate cultural superiority and, in some respects, even a racial one. Yugoslav men are given constant characteristics that define them as a race, not as individual soldiers. To different extents, but with no real exception, they are immoral, wantonly cruel, prone to drunkenness and vulgar hilarity, instinctive and therefore cunning in a predatory fashion, but also brutish and thus unintelligent. Many of the legendary stereotypes that have accompanied almost every filmic Nazi since the war are

recycled here for Tito's men, with two significant exceptions: the first sees the camp elegance of leather-wearing SS officers replaced with an over-hyped sexual appetite that results in at least one explicit rape and a constant, menacing subtext; the second implies the replacement of German evil genius, which emerges from many a *kommandant*, with a brutish Slavic incompetence. The combination of these traits gives the Yugoslav men in the film animalistic qualities that are all too reminiscent of the rhetoric about barbarism and Asian hordes and of traditional anti-Slavism to not be considered part of a racial, and a racist, profiling. This argument is further reinforced not only by the widespread racism against Eastern European immigrants in contemporary Italy, but also by the discovery that exactly the same characteristics are ascribed by Martinelli to the sadistic Soviet partisan who fights in the Italian Communist ranks in *Porzûs*, a random character whose only plausible purpose is to slander Slavs and Communists.

The connotations of the Italian characters are diametrically opposite. A first contrast is immediately given by the demographics of the film's action: on the Italian side there are predominantly children, once the adults are exterminated and with the exception of one man of military age, a middle-aged priest and two women; on the Yugoslav side there are virtually only adult men. This immediately withdraws the story from the context of the war and qualifies the Italians as innocent civilians, and the Yugoslavs as guilty soldiers, but also goes further to imply that the lands in question are Italian: where, in fact, are the women and children of the Yugoslav population, if not in Yugoslavia? Further, the viewer immediately notices that the principal adult Italian characters are a teacher, a doctor and a priest. Through an immediate association with education, healing and devotion, these professionals are symbolic of an Italian population that is innocent even of such sanitised crimes as those hinted at in the film. With the exception of the suspiciously Semitic-looking businessman Pavan, cowardly and greedy, who tries to barter the boy's life for his own family's safety, all Italian civilians are middle-class, unprejudiced, kindly and self-sacrificing, with a strong hint of anti-Fascism: as suggested earlier, they are overseas missionaries rather than occupiers and symbols of oppression, as bystanders or accomplices in heinous crimes. Moreover, there are only four Italian soldiers in the film: the main character, Ettore, is a pacifist – indeed a deserter – who will not shoot even in the most tragic circumstances and against the most callous enemy, unless he is himself attacked; the other three soldiers they encounter, the sole remnants of a defeated army, are more warlike but equally honourable, a far cry from the bullet-dodging

demobilised soldiers that we will encounter in Chapter 5, through the analysis of 1960s films such as *Tutti a Casa* (*Everybody Go Home!*, Luigi Comencini, 1960).

By separating the soldiers from their commanders, the film employs a recurrent defensive strategy that distinguishes Italians from their government, constructing an alibi for the nation in respect to war crimes and simultaneously upholding the idea that Italians were victims of those same absent and neglecting institutions. Perhaps commenting on the widespread sense of abandonment felt by Italian refugees in the postwar period, but perhaps interpreting a more contemporary disillusionment with politicians, Negrin stretches the tension between people and state further than just the Fascist Italian state, to include the monarchical government and the *Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale* (National Committee of Liberation, CLN). In fact, the envoy of the Italian kingdom and of the CLN, Walter, who negotiates and at first fraternises with Tito's brigades, is seen as an ideologue and an intellectual, distant from the people he is supposed to represent, preoccupied by ideological and geopolitical considerations, and blinkered by the alliance between the Allies and the Yugoslav partisans.

And, although he never states it, Walter is also, evidently, a member of the PCI, identified shamelessly through his Trotskyite (and Gramscian) spectacles. This implicit association was meant to add a darker connotation of collaborationism to his friendship with the Yugoslavs. However, unlike Martinelli's, Negrin's anti-Communism is toned down, left to the spectator's judgement, according to a strange code of silence that would ultimately guarantee the approval of the film's political sponsors, the benevolence of RAI's board and, crucially, a vast TV audience. Hence, Walter the Communist intellectual must be unaware of Tito's genocidal plans and ultimately must become himself a victim of those plans: both he and the PCI are thus exonerated from the charges of collaboration that Martinelli had tabled with unequivocal ambiguity in *Porzûs*. And, on a similarly hypocritical note, which also exploits audience awareness of the Serbian ethnic cleansing campaigns in Bosnia and Kosovo, Tito's men are clearly identified as Communist through the ever-present red star, but they openly mock the idea that their fight is ideological: it is, rather, nationalist and ethnic.

Thus, Negrin covered his back by playing on the coexistence of an intensely party-political tension among the institutions commissioning the commemorative film and a widespread anti-political sentiment among Italians, directed at all sides equally. Or, as he put it, undoubtedly

in good faith, Negrin attempted a synthesis, a compromise committed to an apolitical retelling of history:

> The fundamental function of state-owned television is to recount reality, and it is a duty that implies a grave responsibility: you cannot make a film to please this or that politician. And one must never subjugate the story to ideology, but rather tell all the facts without any exclusion. Television reaches people's homes and shows events, which, often, people know nothing about. We can all learn from a story such as this one. Because politicians come and go, but films remain.[31]

Rhetoric aside, what Negrin achieved was nevertheless quintessentially political. Indeed, he embodies the misleading definition of 'apolitical' in which much right-wing revisionism has been wrapped. On the one hand, the craftily designed conservative characters, the narrative and the symbolism of the film were clearly politically charged; on the other, the film stopped short of implicating the PCI, or its political heirs on Italy's centre–left, refusing to stress the link between Yugoslavs and Communism and thus angering some on the right. The result was a picture of anti-Italian persecution in isolation, rather than in the context of war, occupation and racial politics in both Italy and the Balkans. And, on that count at least, Negrin and Martinelli had much in common.

Notwithstanding its outward tentativeness in espousing a neofascist narrative of 'betrayed memory',[32] the film suited its political sponsors: Maurizio Gasparri, AN lieutenant and Minister of Telecommunications (and thus in charge of RAI) in 2005, rose to the occasion, electing himself producer, critic and historian, and adopting a remarkable postmodernist approach in infusing the text with the required meanings. Trampling over protocol, which accords RAI at least the illusion of political autonomy, Gasparri issued invitations in his name to a RAI premiere of the film,[33] to be hosted in the same Roman venue where AN were celebrating their tenth anniversary with some pomp. Then, faced with a loyal audience of comrades and the film's embarrassed cast and crew, Gasparri regaled them with a stinging impromptu attack on historians guilty of downplaying the *foibe*.[34]

Gasparri was ousted from government in 2006, when Berlusconi's coalition lost the narrowest of contests to Romano Prodi's broad centre–left group of parties, the *Unione*; however, Gasparri was back in place two years later, as Senate majority leader within a new party, Berlusconi's *Popolo della Libertà* (People of Freedom), which had in the same year

risen from the hurried merger of *Forza Italia* and AN. In that role, the Roman politician, former deputy secretary of the neofascist youth organisation *Fronte della Gioventú* during the 1970s, Gasparri was just in time to oversee the launch of the third revisionist fiction film discussed in this chapter. Michele Soavi's *Il Sangue dei Vinti* (2008), the partly RAI-funded adaptation of Giampaolo Pansa's controversial book on the *repubblichini*, was first submitted unsuccessfully to the Venice Film Festival, and then eventually shown, but only outside the main competition, at Rome's *Festa del Cinema*, before being briefly distributed in cinemas and then broadcast on television in May 2009.

Set between 1943 and 1945, the film is a rather odd hybrid of melodrama, political exposé and murder-mystery. It follows a policeman, Franco Dogliani, obsessed with solving the murder of a prostitute in Rome, while his family is torn apart by the civil war, as his sister Lucia joins the *repubblichini* and his brother Ettore the Communist partisan brigades. Atrocities and political fervour on both sides are magically resolved when the Fascist girl rescues a Jew from the Germans: utterly devoid of agency, this Jewish character is a throwback to a kind of prop-victim often used only to symbolise victimhood and define her gentile counterpart, while simultaneously reminding the spectator that, nasty though the civil war was, neither side could be as bad as the Germans.

The chief novelty in Soavi's film, in the context of how Italian cinema has traditionally represented World War Two, might be that the Allied bombardments are shown not as the price of liberation but as the scars of occupation, in a sense equivalent to German atrocities. Indeed, Lucia's decision to join the *repubblichini* is brought about by her husband's death in the San Lorenzo bombings in Rome, and not by Fascist fervour or patriotic outrage at Italy's capitulation. This is a significant point, because it can be interpreted either as a wholesale reassessment of the *repubblichini*'s motivation – they were not Fascist after all – or as a scruple stopping the filmmakers from adopting a truly Fascist heroine. Lucia's final decision to die for honour with her few remaining comrades suggests an ideological framework, but, in the context of her choices in the film, this final stance reads as hollow and desperate, rather than coherent and, in its own way, courageous.

The reason behind the film's political ambiguity is that it is not a film about the civil war, political commitment, ideology and the responsibility of choice, but a melodramatic family saga centred on victimhood and laden with symbols of innocence and cheap tears. While much can be made of Lucia and Ettore's sibling rivalry as a trite allegory for civil war, the most important of the Doglianis is Franco: the detective

committed to the state, sceptical of ideology and uninterested in politics, obsessed with justice and memory. In resolving the mystery of the prostitute's death and then devoting his life to finding the place of his sister's execution, Franco embodies key rhetorical characteristics of the right's revisionist effort, such as pity, the search for truth, commitment to the defeated and the obsession with neglected memories, but the film also depoliticises these, offering Soavi an emergency exit from a full-blown Salò apologia.

Like Martinelli, Soavi proposed his film as a groundbreaking work of memory formation, designed to lift a veil of silence over the civil war and simultaneously accuse Italian communists of war crimes; however, like Negrin, Soavi also wanted to achieve a 'discoloured history', neither black nor red.[35] In discussing his inspiration, Soavi was clinical in selecting references designed to distance him from the right, such as Ken Loach's *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* (2006), and to give *gravitas* to his work, such as the quote, made with customary lack of subtlety and some immodesty, from Sophocles' *Antigone*, which opens the film with a representation of Polyneices' burial.[36] Elsewhere he stated:

> I know what this story is about: my father joined Salò, my mother was Jewish. But if I chose to shoot this film it is just for my intention to help pacify [different factions]: placing the attention on human values at the centre. Beginning with the need to bury all the dead.[37]

Alongside him, producer Alessandro Fracassi confirmed that he, too, had been moved 'by a spirit of service; I wanted – I say it with great modesty – to give a small contribution to the country, not to reopen old wounds but to take a step forward.'[38]

This fantasy of a populist consensus that would complete the right's revisionist narrative while being greeted as a voice of truth and reconciliation would remain a dream for Soavi even more than for Negrin. In the text, Soavi's debatable concept of equidistance is translated into a religious alternation of Resistance violence and Fascist reprisal: for instance, the scene in which partisans murder the Dogliani siblings' elderly parents, one of whom is wheelchair-bound, as payback for Lucia's collaboration, is directly followed by the Fascist roundup of hidden Jews. In short, Soavi's narrative weighs up good and evil: a disabled pensioner is worth a Jewish child. That would be sufficient reason to condemn this film, but the naivety and cowardice of Soavi's moral and political alternation are augmented by a degree of malice, because partisan violence is always Communist, but Fascist crimes are almost invariably carried

out by Germans: thus, during the action against the Jews the SS shoot children in the back, but Lucia the *repubblichina*, instead of facing the consequences of her choice of side, ends up distinguishing herself for her humanity.

Even in the perniciousness of its loaded impartiality, *Il Sangue dei Vinti*'s approach left everyone unhappy, even on the right. Pansa, the veteran journalist who has made a new career out of popular histories on the topic of Resistance violence, initially found the film's adaptation of his book too loose, though he later supported it, arguing that the film ends where the book starts.[39] Gasparri, astonishingly, lamented the film's soft touch; the left, less surprisingly and yet exercising some restraint, criticised the film's refusal to draw a moral distinction between Fascists and anti-Fascists or to link anti-Fascist violence against the *repubblichini* to two decades of oppression.[40] Later, on 6 and 7 December 2009, an extended, four-hour version was broadcast by RAI. It attracted 5,821,000 viewers, an audience share of 21%, prompting the right-wing press to celebrate Italians' desire for 'true history'.[41] Yet, when compared with other historical TV films co-produced by RAI, this result was not so impressive: not only could it not match *Il Cuore nel Pozzo*'s astonishing success, but it also lost out to Riccardo Milani's *Cefalonia* (2005), the most watched programme on 10 and 11 April 2005, with 7,306,000 viewers and a share of 26.96%.[42]

The lukewarm popular response to *Il Sangue dei Vinti* may well prove a dislike for partisan histories, but also suggests a proportional representation between narratives of Italian victimhood and popular success. Far from achieving its lofty ambitions of Sophoclean mourning and cross-party consensus, then, Soavi's film is rather an apt example of the politicised confusion that has marked the revision of history and memory in the 15 years of *berlusconismo*: pandering to neofascist memories but also centrist; concerned with rewriting the past and yet primarily focused on disorienting the Italian left's claim to an innate moral compass, rooted largely on its experiences in the Resistance.

This is not to say that a virtuous and honest reconsideration of Italy's divided memories is not necessary in Italy. Nor did all of cinema's recent interest in telling new stories carry the same whiff of gangrened ideological wounds nursed by post-Fascists like Gasparri enjoying power for the first time in half a century, or the shrewd Berlusconian immediacy required to secure new ground through an electoral approach to historical memory. Some filmmakers, for example, have shared in the fascination with the defeated, either by discussing disillusionment in victory as defeat, or by rediscovering the working class, not as the

holder of an immanent commitment to a progressive socialist future, as Communist filmmakers had done ever since Eisenstein, Renoir, and later Visconti and Bertolucci, but as the ultimate defeated.

Giorgio Diritti's *L'Uomo che Verrà* (*The Man Who Will Come*, 2009), an aesthetic gem of rare empathy, acumen and historical honesty, tells the story of the 1944 German massacre at Marzabotto, in the Emilian Apennine mountains, when forces of the Reich and of Salò rounded up and murdered 770 civilians as part of their anti-guerrilla strategy. Diritti adopts the perspective of Martina, a young mute girl traumatised by the loss of her brother: Martina is a witness to the lost daily life of the sharecroppers and a survivor of the massacre that kills her entire family and community. The film ends on a shot of Martina and her newborn brother, whom she has saved. As they sit by themselves amid the devastation Martina rejects the conditional help of the Catholic Church and regains her voice.

The slightly gauche symbolism of Martina's story does not detract from the value and novelty of Diritti's film, which resides particularly in representing the peasants of the Apennines as caught between partisans and Germans, both of whom plunder their few resources in the name of causes, communism, the Reich, the state, which seemingly offer the sharecroppers nothing in return. Diritti's difference stands in a gritty realism that is both old-fashioned and unmistakably modern: old-fashioned because it clearly owes much to neorealism, especially Visconti's; but modern because of its narrative brutality and aesthetic bleakness. These characteristics ensure, for example, that the catharsis that Martina's cure and the survival of a new generation could engender is denied, because it remains deliberately unmatched by any visual cue – the horizon, sunshine, people, a place – but, rather, shrouded in an overwhelming loneliness, a sense of irreplaceable loss and of an enduring horror that defies healing and hope.

Diritti's film belongs in this discussion both as a counterpoint to the right-wing melodramas of the Berlusconi era and as a demonstration of what the concepts of revisionism and of the defeated could and should mean: a genuine and sensitive attempt to recapture the voice of the subaltern and of the forgotten; an attempt to defy prepackaged memories and regain control by changing the lens and angle of our memory's gaze. *L'Uomo che Verrà* reveals that recapturing 'yesterday's defeated' and lifting the veil of silence on certain pages of Italy's history is indeed a necessary and worthwhile exercise, but also that it is one whose significance rests entirely on answering these questions: who are the defeated? Why did they lose, and who beat them? Why were they allegedly denied

a voice and a place in the nation's memories? And to these questions, unlike Diritti, most contemporary filmmakers have privileged answers that exploited genuinely untold stories of Italy's wartime and either failed to challenge key aspects of the dominant narrative or constructed an alternative memory based almost exclusively on forgetfulness and falsity.

A pattern emerges, examining *Il Sangue dei Vinti* together with *Il Cuore nel Pozzo* and *Porzûs*, that reveals the historical revision sponsored by the Berlusconian, neoliberal and neofascist right to have been both partial and flawed. Seldom rising above the polemical dimension of electoral politics, these films have followed two strategies that are apparently contradictory and yet arguably at the root of the films' popular success: first, they have allowed themselves to be a tool in the struggle to occupy the memory battleground and enjoy its spoils, indeed, owing their existence to such a struggle; second, they have shied away from rehabilitating Fascism, rather attempting a conciliatory synthesis between the two sides, false, often clumsy, but clearly quite seductive and not actually that revolutionary.

This latter strategy is the more interesting from an historical perspective, and deserves more than the mixture of bristling indignation and total disregard that Italian commentators have accorded it, all but ignoring the films. The most interesting aspect of this process is not the films' blatant attempt to sanitise the right wing's own history and smear its opponents, but the continuity of key historic tropes of the representation of the 20-year period of Fascist rule. Films like *Porzûs*, *Il Cuore nel Pozzo* and *Il Sangue dei Vinti*, *Cefalonia*, *El Alamein: La Linea del Fuoco* and *Sanguepazzo*, may have introduced the *repubblichini* and the victims of the *foibe* into the popular discourse about the defeated, but they have much more enthusiastically embraced an interpretation that sees Italy and the Italians as the victims of 'History'; they may have indulged a right-wing equivalence of the reasons of Fascists and anti-Fascists, but they have more comfortably fallen back on explaining their defeat with the eternal plight of the common man; they may have charged the alleged Communist cultural hegemony with silencing the defeated, but they have explained that silence more gladly with the populist postulation of the removal of politics from ordinary people.

And, as this book argues, none of these interpretations is exactly revisionist; rather, each idea is enshrined in Italy's historic representation of its Fascist past, stalwarts of the dominant memory of that period and the main obstacles to any honest revision thereof. The boundaries of what is representable have certainly shifted, yet arguably the political

use of cinema and some of the representational tropes applied to that era have stayed much the same. Among the many problems with some of these films – their incestuous relationship with politics; their sloppy cinematography; their narrative banality – revisionism is perhaps the least concerning and, certainly, not a good reason to ignore them, but, rather, to study them. One should probably start from the end, then, because it is the end that reveals the absence of a much-vaunted new beginning and of a shared framework based on a critical awareness of history that would make room for infinite different memories.

Part II
Resistance

3
Neorealist Catharses

To find the roots of the tropes of Italy's cinematic memory and trace their development we require a flashback of our own, all the way back to 24 September 1945. On that day, almost exactly five months after the liberation of Italy, *Roma Città Aperta* (*Rome, Open City*, Roberto Rossellini, 1945) opened in Rome. It was just over two years after the armistice with the Allies had both seen the country collapse into occupation and civil war and set the scene for the emergence of a Resistance movement that would ensure the country's renewed dignity. To those who watched it then, *Roma Città Aperta* was raw with emotion, experience and expectation. In both content and form, it appeared as a revolution to cinemagoers anaesthetised by 20 years of Fascist melodramas yet traumatically stirred by war, hardship and loss.

Many greeted it as the cultural equivalent of a recuperation of national pride, dignity and legitimacy. 'Finally. One of our films is indeed *ours*, felt and sincere, thought-through and anguished,' wrote critic Mario Gromo, summing up a widespread feeling of the film as the embodiment of a 'steadfast, desperate, supreme resistance'.[1] Although at first some, on the left and on the right, felt uneasy at the film's ideological ambiguity or just at its still raw topic,[2] Rossellini's effort was celebrated, and to some extent conveniently appropriated, as a collective triumph, proof of what 'the Italian genius can achieve when it is allowed to operate free of any spiritual restraints', as one reviewer, 'full of legitimate pride', put it.[3] And the public supported the film, contrary to what was long thought: the film made 162,000,000 lire, first among Italian films in the 1945–46 season.[4] This was a remarkable result, although, in Anna Magnani and Aldo Fabrizi, Rossellini's film counted two of Italy's most popular and recognisable stars.[5]

Whether they sensed the novelty inherent in Rossellini's film or just bought into the film's rhetoric of good Italians, foreigners too acclaimed *Open City* and to some extent indulged Italian fantasies of a recaptured virginity. Captain Klaus Mann of the Mediterranean edition of *Stars and Stripes*, writing a note to accompany the special premiere organised by the US Information Agency of the American Embassy in Rome, saluted on the screen the familiar faces of an innocent Rome:

> it would be unfair and superficial to suggest that a clique of decadent parasites represented such a great community. There was another Rome, the true Rome that all those of us have known it cannot but love and respect. *Roma Città Aperta* will be met by the American public as a significant document and a sincere message bearing the promise of liberated Italy.[6]

And so it was: Americans celebrated Italian anti-Fascism and the seductive ingenuity of Rossellini's story-telling from New York's *Daily Worker*, which gave it a three-page spread,[7] to the *New Yorker*.[8]

Yet the importance of *Roma Città Aperta* goes well beyond its immediate impact on Italy and on its global image. In the 1950s, Rossellini inspired French critics and filmmakers who would go on to form the *Nouvelle Vague* (French New Wave), who saw in Rossellini's own brand of neorealism a way of gazing at reality unbound by the aesthetics of traditional realism.[9] André Bazin first,[10] and later Jacques Rivette and others from the pages of *Cahiers du Cinéma*,[11] elevated *Roma Città Aperta* to the status of moral and artistic cornerstone of postwar world cinema, despite the fact that its narrow – and not necessarily sufficiently left-wing for *Cahiers* – political symbolism had certainly not gone unnoticed.[12] The French critique cemented the importance of a film that has since been closely studied and widely celebrated in the general histories of Italian cinema, such as those of Gian Piero Brunetta,[13] Peter Bondanella[14] and Millicent Marcus,[15] in works specifically on neorealism, such as Chris Wagstaff's painstaking 2007 landmark book,[16] and in dedicated volumes, among which the most notable are David Forgacs's comprehensive British Film Institute survey[17] and Sidney Gottlieb's collection of excellent thematic essays.[18] From their respective vantage points they all agreed in seeing in *Roma Città Aperta* a revolutionary film, perhaps best summed up in the words of the filmmakers it inspired: in the prose of Bernardo Bertolucci's homage in *Prima della Rivoluzione* (*Before the Revolution*, 1962), when the lead character states 'one cannot live without

Rossellini',[19] and in the poetry of Pier Paolo Pasolini, stumbling across a screening of the film in 1955:

> Here comes the epic neorealist landscape,/ With telegraph poles, paved paths, pine trees,/ Crumbling *muretti*, the mystical crowd lost in their daily chores,/ The macabre shapes of Nazi occupation . . . / By now nearly paradigm, Anna Magnani's scream,/ Framed by disorderly absolute locks.[20]

Indeed, even now, Rossellini's film and its characters carry such an urgent blend of human warmth, pity and righteous outrage that they infect the viewer with the same exhausted yet expectant gaze. As I was growing up, *Roma Città Aperta* was for us a moral and political vindication. I say 'us' with purpose, and hoping the reader will forgive an excursion into the personal (and perhaps a touch of sentimentalism). In the Roman primary school where I studied in the 1980s, we sang the Resistance song *Bella Ciao* in assembly, presumably with the same mixture of gusto and tedium that our British counterparts might have put into their hymns. Later, in high school just across the Tiber, *Roma Città Aperta* was screened routinely, and, while by nurture and inclination I may have been more susceptible than others to its political legacy, the Resistance was the baggage of all postwar generations, whether or not they decided to lug it around in their lives, open it to look inside or stow it away in their parents' attic. As long as that legacy lasted unchallenged as the moral lynchpin of the nation, therefore, we watched *Roma Città Aperta* as though we had been there. Just as the annual screenings of *The Dam Busters* (Michael Anderson, 1955), *The Great Escape* (John Sturges, 1963) or *A Bridge Too Far* (Richard Attenborough, 1977) helped Brits commemorate and share in the glory of their forefathers' efforts, our regular appointments with Rossellini's masterpiece confirmed to us that we were third-generation Resistance fighters, that anti-Fascism, and most importantly not Fascism, was our national identity and political DNA.

Yet, if this imagined memory of the struggle could make Italians as late as the early 1990s identify with those 1945 audiences, the film itself performed another inclusive miracle: Rossellini's work allowed Italians to identify not only with the passive spectator but also with the historical agents themselves, because the political duopoly he represented on screen still persisted to define, divide and motivate Italian voters. In 1945, as much as later, *Roma Città Aperta* was the symbolic and emotional embodiment of the CLN. The anti-Fascist camp

the film reconstructs counted Christians and Communists, intellectuals and workers, and thus offered a barely veiled and heavily simplified metonymy for the actually rather uneasy alliance of Christian Democrats and Communists – and Socialists, Liberals and Monarchists – which populated the Resistance movement. Rossellini, as an anti-dogmatic and progressive Christian, was well placed to perform such a synthesis.[21]

Rossellini was no mouthpiece for the new order, just as his earnest Fascist war films, *La Nave Bianca* (*The White Ship*, 1941), *Un Pilota Ritorna* (*A Pilot Returns*, 1942) and *L'Uomo della Croce* (*Man With a Cross*, 1943) had carried a Catholic and humanist, at times even potentially anti-war, message that fell somewhat outside the party line. What his film shows is an intuition that the humiliated and divided nation desperately needed an inclusive narrative. Enriched by the collective experiences of these newly liberated Romans, the film delivered this by imbuing his work with symbolism and ethics but also with reality; he made a film about choice in the face of uncertainty and, in so doing, he constructed something akin to a creation myth for postwar Italians, inaugurating a widely influential film school along the way. Thus, the paradox of *Roma Città Aperta* is that it is both an allegorical propaganda film, filled with symbolism and stereotype, and a homage to people and places that even now convey to viewers their own sense of emotional and cultural authenticity.

The characters of Pina and the children, in particular, popularise the anti-Fascist struggle in *Roma Città Aperta* and thus in part explain its apparent paradox: on the one hand, Rossellini exploits them to exonerate Italians as a whole through their paradigmatic innocence; on the other hand, whether they are non-professional actors like the children or stars like Anna Magnani, they secure an empathetic connection by looking, sounding and feeling overwhelmingly real. Magnani's Pina is a Roman and a mother, a symbol of womanhood and national identity, of Christian values and of the working class, of virtue and of 'normal' sexuality, a multi-faceted character of whom much could be said[22]; her every action, her every yell, just like the unlooked-for moments of quiet and tenderness, are informed by and define her, her class and her city. Everything about Pina is instinctive: our first encounter with her, as she returns from storming a bakery, her first reaction to Manfredi and the story her fiancé Francesco tells of his own first meeting with Pina, all establish her as fiery and impatient. Similarly instinctive is Pina's morality: for instance, she is prepared to break the law, earthly or divine, when it is wrong, as in the case of the hoarding baker, or too rigid, as in her

pregnancy out of wedlock. This prerogative all along leads towards the manner of her death: as she tears after Francesco in a sequence that has shaped modern filmmaking, Pina simply cannot refrain from protecting her own.

Pina's uneducated wisdom, temper and commitment to her family make her emerge as a symbol for the Italian working class as a whole, while her motherly virtues and her human contradictions also make her the paradigmatic good Italian woman. Yet she also serves an important political and, in hindsight, historiographical role in the film: Magnani's character links all the partisan fighters in the story, and thus the different souls of the Italian Resistance the film so ably reconciles. Pina is working-class, like Francesco and like the people that the Communist intellectual Manfredi is supposed to represent; she is a Communist sympathiser by virtue of her aversion to socio-economic injustice, but she is also a devout Catholic, like don Pietro. In this way Pina performs a pivotal narrative role, but she also provides representation for all those Italians who rejected Fascism or suffered through the occupation without enjoying the sense of belonging and predestination that comes from a distinct ideological framework or from a political party.

Through Pina's character, Rossellini included the Italian people, and specifically the apolitical sectors of the working class, into the history of the Resistance and simultaneously established a narrative of the partisan struggle as a bottom-up, spontaneous and popular anti-Fascism that could run parallel to the top-down framework of organised Resistance and liberation represented by the CLN and the first National Unity governments of Ferruccio Parri and Alcide De Gasperi. The result was equivalent to the Gaullist memory of Resistancialist France: an all-encompassing righteousness that took the form both of inspired leadership and of an intrinsically anti-Fascist national character, the prerogatives of which could be manipulated to fit any number of purposes, be they patriotic or internationalist, democratic or Catholic, progressive or conservative.[23]

What Pina did for many adult Italians in 1945, the children of her tenement did for posterity. While she largely exonerated the generation who had lived through Fascism, her offspring passed their innocence and their agency to those who would come afterwards, charged with rebuilding and healing the nation. Pina's son Marcello belongs to a band of children who carry out a sabotage mission at a nearby railway terminal, using explosives and indirectly causing the subsequent German reprisal. The same instinctive rules that apply to Pina's behaviour inform the children, for whom guerrilla warfare is more neighbourhood

protection than national struggle. Their leader Romoletto is a disabled orphan for whom killing the occupying forces appears to be a personal issue, fuelled by resentment and armed by a rather rudimentary idealism articulated in no specific vision of the future. Arguably, his character might have suffered a similar fate to Edmund in Rossellini's own *Germania Anno Zero* (*Germany Year Zero*, 1948), the German boy who, irremediably weighed down by the burden of his father's sins, commits patricide and later suicide; but *Roma Città Aperta* is a place of deliverance, not judgement, and Romoletto will eventually lay down his weapons by sharing the children's sombre but hopeful final walk down the Via Trionfale towards St Peter's cathedral in the distance. And why should it be otherwise, if the film also acquits most adult Italians of any responsibility for the country's Fascist past?

The children's innocence in *Roma Città Aperta* is not a counterpoint to the adults' guilt, and their bravery – ultimately reckless though it is – is not used to underscore the cowardice and selfishness that often inform the struggle between duty and survival. Rather, the innocence of Romoletto's gang is an osmotic quality that links them doubly to their parents' generation. On the one hand, the children have the power to heal the wounds of 20 years of Fascism, cleanse the slate, lead their parents onto the right path: when Italian troops are ordered by the Germans to execute Don Pietro, the children's whistling is sufficient to induce in them the courage of passive resistance, and thus save the soldiers' souls. On the other hand, innocence is the parents' gift to their offspring: by the self-sacrifice of Pina, Francesco, Manfredi and Don Pietro the new Italy will hold on desperately to a shared sense of dignity and identity (Figure 3.1).

Rossellini thus simultaneously raises an impenetrable wall between Fascists and anti-Fascists and yet makes that 'us and them' distinction redundant by reducing 'them' to hardly anyone at all. There are some Fascists in *Roma Città Aperta*; when Pina warns Francesco of the impending raid, she says 'the Germans, the Fascists', a formula repeated elsewhere in the film. But who are they and how Fascist are they, exactly? A few men in the uniform of the militia are the only recognisably Mussolinian characters; the chief of Rome's police, heavily modelled on Pietro Caruso, who had just been executed for his responsibility in the Fosse Ardeatine massacre,[24] is first and foremost a bureaucrat whose ideology appears unimportant; Pina's sister Lauretta flirts with the Germans but is hardly politicised; her friend Marina, a drug addict, goes as far as denouncing her anti-Fascist lover, but her betrayal is not politically motivated. Thus, the Italian 'them' in the film are not

Figure 3.1 Osmotic innocence: the children's whistling inspires the adults' conscience
Source: Courtesy of Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.

just a fragment of the population, but a fragment drawn from a moral undergrowth of misfits, opportunists, degenerates and idiots. The men are greedy and cowardly, and they are branded accordingly, with misshapen features and unpleasant voices; the women are lost and shallow, they value riches and devalue their bodies. The men are too ugly and the women too beautiful. In comparison, the Roman population, with hardly any exception, forms a wholesome counterpoint made of strong men and equally burly women, singlets for hairy chests and home-made dresses restraining reassuring, motherly bosoms. These are the uniforms of atavistic humanism, no-nonsense Catholic values and working-class common sense. There is little sign here of the crowds that had cheered Mussolini and thrived or survived by his government's long rule.

Instead, *Roma Città Aperta* constructs a different binary between Italians and Germans and one that, after up to 18 months of brutal occupation, was painfully real to Italian audiences and anyone involved in the film. Don Pietro's character was a dramatised rendition of Don Morosini, and Pina's murder was based on a real event, as was the children's sabotage scene.[25] By September 1945, the German armed forces were the natural enemy of Italians and had in their retreat done more than enough to deserve the collective stereotype of callous and calculating mass murderers. However, for Italy's sake, the film ignores the

fact that Germany had ever been its ally. Furthermore, it employs a series of images that portray the Germans, and especially the SS, as less than human: they are decadent, cruel, unforgiving, sadistic; so foreign are Christian values to them that they cannot understand how others would cherish them. In the case both of Major Bergmann and of the spy Ingrid, Rossellini unsubtly uses homosexuality as further evidence of their depravity. The *hubris* of the master race dooms it and simultaneously emphasises the modest bravery of the Italians.

Notwithstanding this patriotic message invested with its own blessed but blatant blend of Catholic and Communist parables, it would be wrong to see in *Roma Città Aperta* merely a shallow operation of national self-acquittal, a sanitised retelling of the recent past or an uplifting celebration of the innate morality of the Italian people. Although it performed all these roles in some ways, Rossellini's film does not compromise on investing the individual with choice and responsibility, merging the political and the personal spheres and thus retaining an underlying and deeply moving honesty. The underlying inaccuracy of a spontaneous and overwhelmingly popular Resistance movement serves here the worthy purposes of spurring people to action, demanding social justice and providing a synthesis of resistance and revolution which neorealism sought and seldom found. In those dramatic years, it was perhaps necessary for the nation's self-representation to be more inspiring than truthful, and in that representation we should see not only a collective absolution but also a significant contribution to the psychological and moral reconstruction of the nation. In that context, *Roma Città Aperta*'s greatness and that of its writers, Sergio Amidei with Rossellini and the young Federico Fellini, was the ability not to sacrifice critical analysis on the altar of inclusiveness and pacification. The significance of highlighting militancy and commitment to audiences, in 1945 and beyond, should not be underestimated: the film may provide a way out collectively, but it also charges both its characters and its viewer with an inescapable sense of duty and accountability.

Roma Città Aperta set the broad template for the neorealist interpretation of Fascism and anti-Fascism for at least 15 years, although the Catholic dimension predominant in Rossellini's film would not be widely shared. Although not everyone would achieve Rossellini's story-telling talent, although others would be more stylised in their ideological messages, although the National Unity government that inspired Rossellini's vision of a broad anti-Fascism would soon give way to a domestic version of the Cold War duopoly on the Tiber, certain themes would remain constant. These recurrent tropes would long

constitute the lynchpins of Italy's 'good' memory of its war: one made, like all memory, of selected moments, amnesias and silences.

The first way in which *Roma Città Aperta* set representational and political trends in Italy's 'historiophoty' of Fascism, to borrow Hayden White's term, is in focusing on the Resistance, not the war. Without exception, neorealist narratives would follow this line, dwelling on the 18 months after 8 September 1943 and even more specifically on 1944–45; the Resistance was then at its strongest, and enjoyed a leadership structure, links with the CLN and the Allies, a capillary organisation in the larger cities and decent military capabilities in the more mountainous regions of the peninsula's Centre-North.[26] This focus was neither inaccurate nor illegitimate, but it was partial: unlike Rossellini, neorealist filmmakers were generally long-term anti-Fascists, like Visconti, or youngsters who had recently come out of the Resistance experience, like Lizzani; they were also left-wing, committed members of the PCI for the most part, and still evident in their works is a proud yet desperate attempt to shape the new postwar Italy in more than just symbolic ways.

Nevertheless, the choice to ignore so thoroughly the early years of the war, let alone the pre-war years, is an interesting one. If, as the analysis of *Roma Città Aperta* has suggested, Italy was in dire need of a catharsis and a morally inspiring memory of its war, there were certainly other interests involved in a wholesale forgetfulness of the dark years. In the country's first postwar years, Italy's careful reinsertion in the international fold on the American side benefited from playing down popular support for Mussolini's regime, portraying Italians as his first victims, not unlike the way West Germans would later be embraced as Hitler's first casualties,[27] although Italians had a much softer path to re-education. The image of the country that Italian cinema projected internationally was important to postwar governments, yet arguably domestic concerns were more important in the apparent erasure of Fascism and the early war years than constructing a new global image. The Andreotti Law of 1949, which sought to control the cinema industry through the political allocation of public subsidies and through censorship, did not target Resistance films but, rather, the films that demanded social justice: when it came to Italy's reputation, the DC government was more concerned with hiding the rags of postwar Italy than its vintage black shirts.

No stakeholder in the postwar Italian establishment stood to gain anything from a frank and open dissection of Italy's recent past. For the PCI, the Fascist years marked difficult periods of division, indecision,

exile and ineffectiveness. The false dawn of the Popular Fronts in France and Spain passed on, to leave the European left reeling from defeat and isolation, while the Fascist regimes arguably enjoyed the peak of their popularity. The anti-Fascist radio programmes broadcast since 1938 by Spanish ghost radios such as Radio Milan Libre may have been powerful enough to convince Fascist authorities that they were transmitted from within Italy,[28] but they were hardly competitive propaganda against imperial triumphs, prolific mothers and the constructed narratives of wealth and warfare. Moreover, the 1939 non-aggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union left European Communists following Stalin's directives uncritically during 17 long months of uneasy inaction. The postwar PCI, as the country's second largest party, certainly had little to gain from examining its underground years, except alienating weary voters and abandoning the momentum gained through its leadership in the guerrilla fighting.

If the PCI had no reason to be introspective, the Christian Democrats were positively averse to self-analysis: their eyes were fixed on the reconstruction of the nation and the consolidation of their power base. Even though many leading Christian Democrats had been active anti-Fascists, their party spoke to constituencies, such as Northern industrialists, Southern landowners and the Catholic masses, who had largely supported Fascism. The Americans, bankrolling the DC's governments, desired strategic anti-Communists rather than nostalgic anti-Fascists, and the Catholic Church, the DC's main domestic ally, certainly had no interest in thinking back to Mussolini, whom Pius XI had called the Man of Providence in 1929.[29] Who then, in 1945–46, would want to remember the apotheoses that accompanied the Concordat of 1929, the invasion of Ethiopia or Hitler's visit to Rome in 1938, let alone the more divisive pages of the Racial Manifesto or the assault on France in June 1940? Obviously not the Monarch, King Victor Emmanuel III, whose shameful behaviour in September 1943 had won him much popular scorn and who, as the remaining institutional link with Fascist Italy, was left hanging on hopelessly, and briefly, to his throne.[30] Narrowing the war down to 8 September 1943–25 April 1945 was therefore a popular move; crucial to the wholesale ideological recycling of the nation, it allowed filmmakers to construct a separation between Italian people and Italian government.

This narrow narrative setting is at the root of the other key representational trends in neorealist war films, all of which were first encapsulated in *Roma Città Aperta*. Italy's moral rebirth passed through parallel processes that downplayed, on the one hand, the popularity of Mussolini

and, on the other, the seriousness of his Fascist regime: the 'parenthesis' imagined by the liberal philosopher Benedetto Croce and accepted by many who, like him, had interest in dismissing ambiguities or indiscretions that occurred in between the brackets.[31] In these films, the Resistance provided the path to the nation's catharsis, while the German occupation ensured a cruel reference point for the Fascists' own violence. In the films of the immediate postwar years, Italian Fascists were not the defeated reminders of a 20-year regime that used to be both popular and powerful until and beyond Mussolini's arrest on 23 July 1943; they were mere collaborators, greedy and inadequate human beings, lackeys without ideas of their own beyond self-aggrandisement, servants of a would-be German master race almost alien to humanity. Add to this an image of the average Italian as overwhelmingly sympathetic towards the Resistance, if not actively partaking in it, and the neorealist war offered postwar audiences a useful and appealing self-portrait.

It was not necessarily untrue to suggest a widespread Italian disaffection for Mussolini, and especially for the war, or to point out differences in policy and individual behaviour between German and Italian troops. Neglecting almost entirely the existence of the Republic of Salò, however, was a much more significant distortion. There was perhaps no space, in the frenzy of reconstruction and pacification, for the counter-narratives of the civil war, yet these films went further, establishing an orthodoxy that denied the very existence of a civil war for the best part of five decades. The Fascist squads were forgotten, and the youngsters who chose to fight for the Fascists as late as 23 April 1945 – the ones Violante would recall in 1996 – were not forgotten simply because they were never discovered. The neorealist orthodoxy was the cinematic reflection of a peace based not on the solidity of awareness and justice but on the inclusiveness of selective memory and amnesty.

There were, of course, exceptions. Only months after the holy alliance of Catholics, Communists and common people celebrated in *Roma Città Aperta*, Rossellini's own *Paisà* (*Paisan*, 1946) offered a more nuanced picture. *Paisà* is unique in neorealist cinema because it crosses the divide between the two souls of that film school: wartime Resistance and postwar social justice. *Paisà*'s six episodes journey up the Italian peninsula, from Sicily to the Po river valley, a journey that 'represents the spirit of the Resistance in its most ample and inclusive human geography [and] conduces two different peoples [Catholics and Communists] to the acknowledgment of a shared identity, of shared purpose in life and struggle'.[32] The result of this 'moral ascent through the peninsula', as Brunetta defines it,[33] was emotionally less engaging, narratively less

fluent and commercially less successful than *Roma Città Aperta*,[34] but politically more thoughtful.

Rossellini achieves subtlety at the cost of hope: a sacrifice that probably explains the film's poor commercial result. As soon as the film ventures into analysing the dramatic conditions of postwar Italy with his gritty and empathetic realism, *Paisà* renounces any hope of a new beginning. In the later film, the children who had walked towards St Peter's Cathedral at the end of *Roma Città Aperta* had not lost their innocence, but had certainly lost their hope: Maddalena in the Sicilian episode, the Neapolitan boy Pasquale, arguably even Francesca, the young woman of the Roman episode, represent much harsher prospects than the admittedly dramatic ones of Marcello and Romoletto. The first character, silent Maddalena, is shot by a sniper while leading an American soldier on a reconnaissance mission; her character is surrounded by an air of resignation, perhaps a peasant premonition of a predestined fate, which is completely different from the fighting spirit of Rossellini's young Romans. The second character, the Neapolitan street boy, is more reminiscent of Marcello and his mates in resilience and resourcefulness; however, his abhorrent living conditions belie his humour and strip him of agency in the present or expectations in the future. Faced with that desolation, the GI he has befriended can only flee. As we move up the peninsula we meet Francesca, a Roman girl who becomes a prostitute to make ends meet. Francesca was played by Maria Michi, who had interpreted Marina in *Roma Città Aperta*, and her character is indeed better compared to those of Marina and Lauretta than to the children's. Unlike the tormented Marina or the shallow Lauretta, however, Francesca's prostitution – to an American, not German, clientele – does not corrupt her soul. This is not only because her behaviour this time has no political implication, but also because Rossellini has abandoned in *Paisà* the quest for collective inspiration and revival he had espoused in *Roma Città Aperta*. Whereas in the 1945 film survival was a collective struggle that depended on virtue, a year later – faced with the already certain demise of postwar consensus – it became a lonelier pursuit in which virtue, while retaining its importance, had much looser criteria.

The shifting meanings of innocence in Rossellini's children reveal a broader concern for Italy's fate. Even in tragedy, Marcello's boys had and were a community; none of the children in *Paisà*, nor, indeed, any of the adults there – save perhaps the friars of the fifth episode, co-written by Fellini – have such comfort in unity and dignity in the task they are to perform. It is genuinely disheartening to watch the two films together

now and realise that the contagious hope of *Roma Città Aperta* was so shortlived. As a result, although *Paisà* shares some of the same sense of urgency as Rossellini's earlier film, it also contains the seeds of the desolate nostalgia for a bygone era that would move Pasolini, sitting in a shabby suburban cinema ten years later, to wonder how the future had become a mere memory:

> They are adults now [the children of *Roma Città Aperta*]: they have lived/ their dismaying postwar/[…] and are now around me, wretched men/ whose every martyrdom has proved useless,/ servants of time, in these days/ when the painful wonder arises,/ the awareness that all this light,/ by which we lived, was a mere dream/ unwarranted, illogical, source/ now of solitary, shameful tears.[35]

Rossellini's second neorealist film is exceptional in another way. The Po delta episode introduced the concept of civil war, and did so without separating it from the war of liberation which the Resistance also was. Slow and almost silent, narratively less constructed than the other five, the episode's famous epilogue is the beautiful and emotionally devastating wide-angle shot of the body of a partisan floating down the river, and its retrieval by local fishermen. All played out in almost complete silence. Wagstaff has shown how the episode is shot in a style different, more improvised and yet more careful than Rossellini's usual way, relying on 'formal symmetries that do not appear frequently in Rossellini's films', but also how the different aesthetics of the segment do not coincide with a thematic break with the rest of the film.[36] The Po delta episode reinforces the dual themes of the universal destruction caused by war and the specific, Italian, mourning associated with the retrieval of the partisan's body.[37] Displaying the brutality of Italians against Italians simultaneously indicted the Fascist forces and accorded them a degree of legitimacy as part of Italy's memories of the war, if only as the enemy. Furthermore, the film's ending, on the flat expanses of the Po Delta, represents the opposite of the monumentality of St Peter's Cathedral in *Roma Città Aperta*'s closing shot: an uncertain, fluid future that denies any closure, where the other had been definite and reassuring.

But Rossellini was exceptional in gaze, story-telling and empathy. Working with Communist scriptwriter Sergio Amidei, he merged the analytical skills of Luchino Visconti with the humanity of Vittorio De Sica and Cesare Zavattini. Outside Rossellini, neorealist films were almost religious in confining political critique to their postwar stories and commemoration of heroism and martyrdom to their wartime ones.

The former, in memorable films such as *La Terra Trema* (*The Earth Trembles*, Luchino Visconti, 1948), *Ladri di Biciclette* (*Bicycle Thieves*, Vittorio De Sica, 1948), *Riso Amaro* (*Bitter Rice*, Giuseppe De Santis, 1949), *Caccia Tragica* (*Tragic Hunt*, Giuseppe De Santis, 1949) and many others, displayed mercilessly the flaws of the new Italy, its old vices and the betrayal of post-liberation expectations of social justice; the latter, films like *Il Sole Sorge Ancora* (*Outcry*, Aldo Vergano, 1946) and *Achtung Banditi!* (*Attention! Bandits!*, Carlo Lizzani, 1951) insisted on celebrating that very liberation as the birth of a new society that in fact had already failed. Indeed, the seeds of this failure were carried in the new Italy's own creation myth, based on the inclusiveness, selectiveness and silences already discussed.

One would have to wait until 1954 to find a film that tackled the rise of Fascism rather than its ignominious fall. Carlo Lizzani's *Cronache di Poveri Amanti* (*Chronicles of Poor Lovers*), based on Vasco Pratolini's 1947 semi-autobiographical novel, was set in 1925 Florence, amid the arrogance of a new regime still trying to steer a course between revolution and normalisation. Seven years between the publication of a book and its adaptation into film is, indeed, a short period, yet it is tempting to speculate on the timing of Lizzani's film. There is little doubt that a film about the 1920s would not have been eminently palatable to audiences in the immediate postwar years, and perhaps in that inevitable commercial fact – a concern that would have been infinitely less pressing to a novelist than to a film producer – one can find some explanation for such an absence, although we should not underestimate the neorealists' legitimate desire and need to tell contemporary and topical stories about the struggle for liberation, the symptom of 'a mood, a tide of emotion and ideas'.[38]

Certainly, seeing the highly stylised and theatrical street setting in which most of Lizzani's film is played out, hearing its voice-over narrator, it seems not to belong with its predecessors of the late 1940s, but maybe more with the more traditional poetic realism of the 1930s. Nevertheless, it is now commonly accepted that both the aesthetics and poetics of neorealist cinema were heterogeneous to such an extent that it is hard to identify it as a coherent film school, let alone mark its end. Indeed, Rossellini suggested in a 1959 letter to *L'Unità* that attempts 'to label' the movement were at the roots of its demise.[39] *Cronache di Poveri Amanti* belongs with neorealism because Lizzani, born in 1922, is neorealist both in his theoretical writings and in his political preoccupations. He cut his teeth as a scriptwriter on numerous neorealist films, including De Santis's *Riso Amaro*, for which he received an Academy

Award nomination, and his first film, *Achtung Banditi!*, made at 29 years of age, is a paradigmatic neorealist war film. Furthermore, Pratolini's book constituted one of the foundation stones of literary neorealism. Finally, Lizzani's film shares many of the axioms of neorealism even as its aesthetics distance themselves from it: the attention to morality and the social role of film as parable; the emphasis on collective behaviour and the class struggle; the belief in the inherent virtuosity of the working classes.

In respect to class, in particular, there is little difference between Lizzani's historical drama and the political films of the late 1940s, in which shepherds, fishermen, factory workers and the urban proletariat discovered or rediscovered class solidarity to overcome the enemy, be it the Germans, the Fascists or the postwar government. One of the weaknesses in the neorealist analysis of the Fascist period, and particularly in their more conventionally Communist efforts, was the forced equivalence they drew between Fascism, Nazism and capitalism, a simplification which led them to misunderstand Fascism as an ideology and wrongly to presume working-class aversion to Fascist populism. Lizzani's film, based on the experiences of the Florentine microcosm of Via del Corno, follows that template: the heroes are the independent and politically active artisans of the street, Maciste the farrier in particular; the salaried employees working for them, among them Mario the narrator, who is a typographer and delivery boy; and Gesuina the humble maid, who overcomes her association with the evil moneylender to reveal a conscience and wisdom directly related to the extreme rural poverty whence she has come.

By contrast, wealth is the great corruptor in Lizzani's film – and in Pratolini's book. Notably, what the film suggests is not a direct ideological equation between the middle class and Fascism, which would have been interestingly damning of Italy as a nation, but a moral one between wealth, or its pursuit, and vice. The moneylender, known eerily as *la Signora*, the Lady, makes a point of showing that she is neither Fascist nor anti-Fascist, that money is above politics because all political sides need it and, if one controls it, one can control them. Other middle-class characters, such as the hotel owner, are characterised as sly and immoral, exploiting prostitution and spying for the authorities. The main Fascist characters, Carlino and Osvaldo, are dandies, selfish and shallow, who covet money even though they do not actually have that much of it. Even among the anti-Fascists, the pursuit of wealth and class mobility is identified as a distraction from the path of proletarian righteousness. Ugo the street merchant, who by rights belongs

with Maciste and his fellow anti-Fascists, is corrupted by the pursuit of fast money and fast women: his downfall is marked by the act of breaking up a family and his resurgence by the act of forming one with Gesuina. Similarly, the character of Alfredo, the smart and up-and coming grocer, newly married to an equally elegant wife, signifies the lower middle class's false idol of individual prosperity, pursued at the cost of social justice. On his deathbed, Alfredo will ultimately accept responsibility for his own doom because he had believed that he could remain apolitical, concentrating on the selfish pursuit of class mobility rather than the virtuous one of class solidarity: the same black shirts he had not been concerned with will hand him the fatal beating. Although perhaps narratively less important than others, Alfredo is a key character politically in the film as he delivers from his deathbed a message of commitment for posterity: 'remember that I do not forgive those who have hurt me so much.'

Those who have hurt Alfredo, who have ruined his wife, who have bullied the inhabitants of Via del Corno, who have vexed, stolen, blackmailed and raped, are the Fascists; those who kill Maciste, Alfredo and several others are the Fascists. They are, most of all, Italians and not Germans. This obvious narrative fact is significant in regard to postwar cinema on Fascism and to its role in constructing a memory of those years. Given the widespread amnesia around certain aspects of the regime – which cinema largely abetted – and the sanitised, anti-Fascist self-image that film has consistently offered postwar Italians, seeing Fascists on screen as callous and cruel, even gratuitously brutal, had the potential to challenge the silences of Italy as a society and of individual spectators.

Ultimately that potential is arguably wasted by the film's unwillingness to make the Fascists a majority, or even a significant minority. Given some of the film's choices – its honesty in regard to Fascist violence and its knowledge of the conflict internal to Fascism between revolution and institutionalisation in particular – it is grating to see the film reject in such a wholesale manner the idea of working-class support for the new regime. The characterisation of the chief Fascist bully, especially, finds aesthetic and narrative echoes in the cinematic *mafiosi* of rural neorealist films, Visconti's Sicilian fishing bosses in *La Terra Trema* or De Santis's greedy shepherd in *Non c'è Pace Tra gli Ulivi* (*No Peace Under the Olive Tree*, 1950), rather than in the political violence of the early 1920s. Thus, significant links persist to more mainstream neorealist Fascists, and specifically its end-of-Empire fools and cowards. Ideology is all but absent, as though Fascism could not be accorded the legitimacy

of a worldview, albeit a despicable one: Carlino, for example, laments the institutionalised regime's betrayal of the revolution, but then he behaves as a petty thug, not an idealist; his comrade Osvaldo is clueless, constantly fearful, pathetically cursing the 'prior engagement' that had prevented him from attending Fascism's crowning moment, the March on Rome of 22 October 1922; although not stigmatised physically as in other films, both characters are greasy and cowardly, arrogant as a group but useless on their own.

Of course, the political and historical novelty of a film like Lizzani's cannot be underestimated: the temporal setting of the story defies the post-armistice narratives privileged by both his contemporaries and those who followed him; and the emphasis on Fascist political violence will remain virtually unmatched until Bertolucci's films in the 1970s. Nevertheless, *Cronache di Poveri Amanti* did fit the paradigm of neorealist historiophoty of Fascist Italy in one crucial way: that is, by constructing an Italian who is overwhelmingly anti-Fascist. Lizzani frames this collective goodness in terms of class, rather than national identity or culture, but the key tropes of victimisation, of a path from selfishness to political awareness, and of a moral compass grounded in values such as family, community and hard work remain constant.

Notwithstanding the cultural revolution that was neorealism or its political impact in motivating generations of filmmakers and audiences, its longest-lived contribution to postwar Italy's memory of Fascism and the war was establishing a narrative of martyrdom, Resistance and catharsis that continues to frame the myth of *italiani brava gente*. Of course, neorealist filmmakers offered much more than such an uplifting vision of Italy's past: they elected themselves as the political and social conscience of a nation finally free; they offered a vision of social justice for Republican Italy; they demanded a marked discontinuity with the past in a forceful and uncompromising way that scared the fledgling Christian Democratic government into passing the Andreotti Law of 1949; they did not go away when that law made it harder to gather the necessary finance and reintroduced an all-too-familiar censorship; and they, of course, inspired a generation of filmmakers in France, Britain, Eastern Europe, Latin America and Asia,[40] to privilege an aesthetics centred on reality and a narrative inextricably linked to society and politics.

Hence, it would be unfair to characterise neorealism's historical films as merely vectors of an uplifting and partial memory, but it is the paradox of neorealism that its insight into the socio-political and cultural mechanisms of Fascist Italy would come from the films it set in the

postwar period, rather than from its war films. When their films attacked an imperfect and hypocritical postwar settlement, De Sica, Visconti, De Santis and Rossellini saw and allowed others to see a significant degree of continuity between Fascist and post-Fascist Italy, yet when they tackled the memory of the war the need to celebrate the Resistance struggle led them to belie the fact that Italy had ever been Fascist. Thus, the fading Fascist mottos etched behind the desk of Visconti's Sicilian bosses or the clientelistic economy and elitist justice system chastised in countless neorealist masterpieces, from *Ladri di Biciclette* to *Umberto D* (Vittorio De Sica, 1952), from *Non c'è Pace Tra gli Ulivi* to *L'Onorevole Angelina* (*Angelina*, Luigi Zampa, 1947), are historically more introspective and critical than many contemporary Resistance narratives. And, as time went on and the urgency of the neorealist message of social justice dwindled, together with the authenticity of its wartime testimony and its expectations for the future, neorealism's uplifting and selective memory would be all that remained, its meaning and purpose routinely and forever distorted by changing political, economic, social and cultural contexts.

4
Luigi Zampa: Fascism and *italianità*

It would have been understandable if the image of Fascism and Fascists offered by war-themed neo-realist films, in both its Marxist and its non-Marxist, humanist incarnation, had been an overwhelming one that left no space for alternative visions. Nevertheless, neorealist Fascism was not an all-encompassing orthodoxy and there was indeed room for alternative reconstructions of those years; different gazes turned to aspects of Fascist Italy that neorealist authors had preferred to gloss over and apportioned significant attention to elements they had neglected. Luigi Zampa's impressively fertile body of work (38 titles between 1933 and 1979) provides an intriguing example of such an alternative. Between 1947 and 1962, Zampa realised no less than five films explicitly concerned with Italy under Mussolini's regime. Already in the willingness to deal with the 1930s and even the 1920s, a distinguishable fracture emerges between Zampa's works and those of other neorealists who, as the previous chapter has discussed, mostly privileged post-1943 Resistance narratives. Even so, some of Zampa's works certainly belong temporally, aesthetically and politically to neorealism: in particular his first postwar film, *Vivere in Pace* (*To Live in Peace*) of 1947, fits perfectly both stylistically and thematically in the admittedly broad neorealist church.

Zampa's five films about Fascism are *Vivere in Pace*,[1] *Anni Difficili* (*Difficult Years*, 1948),[2] *Anni Facili* (*Easy Years*, 1953),[3] *L'Arte di Arrangiarsi* (*The Art of Getting Along*, 1954)[4] and *Anni Ruggenti* (*Roaring Years*, 1963).[5] With the exception of the first, which is set narrowly in the very final stages of World War Two, they all straddle and to an extent ignore the war, focusing primarily now on pre-war Italian society (*Anni Difficili* and *Anni Ruggenti*), now on the continuity between pre- and postwar Italy (*Anni Facili* and *L'Arte di Arrangiarsi*). All five works deal with

Fascist society, and specifically with what Zampa saw as Italian vices that allowed that regime to thrive and ensured its popularity. Together, they form a remarkably coherent body of work and provide us with an invaluable sample that has been underestimated in many respects: its cinematic value; its political and historical argument; its contribution to Italian memory of the Fascist period. Furthermore, the middle three films form a trilogy of their own, marking the partnership of Zampa and novelist Vitaliano Brancati, the distinguished Sicilian Liberal author who died in 1954 before he could successfully see *L'Arte di Arrangiarsi* past the censors. Brancati had in his youth flirted with Fascism, but had become disillusioned by the regime and an increasingly fervent anti-Fascist from the mid-1930s on. Brancati's scripts thus confer a particularly critical and partly autobiographical gaze on *Anni Difficili*, *Anni Facili* and *L'Arte di Arrangiarsi*, along with a conservative anti-Fascist stance quite different from that adopted by both the Catholic and Marxist neorealists.

This chapter discusses these five films and, in so doing, analyses both how Zampa's message subtly changed over time and how the same message took on different meaning as Italy's cultural and political context changed between 1947 and 1963. Zampa and Brancati's analysis of conformism, selfishness, clientelism and cowardice may have remained constant throughout this period, but the significance of that analysis and its ability to stimulate debate evolved radically between the context of poverty, memory and hope of the immediate postwar years and that of consumerism, forgetfulness and alienation that characterised the Italy of the economic miracle. In 1947–48, the authors' analysis of Italian vices was solidly rooted in the historical narrative of the film: an overwhelmingly historical discussion of the Fascist recent past. By the mid-1950s, and certainly by 1962, the same critique had lost strength as an historical argument but gained some traction as a predominantly topical view of present-day Italy, specifically in relation to contemporary concerns over corruption.

According to this reading, Zampa's films with Brancati, while being broadly consistent with the themes introduced in the Roman director's solo efforts, hold a particular edge in the political and emotional analysis of corruption and clientelism – the dark side of the *brava gente* myth – which the authors discussed as Italian vices crucial to the political success of Fascism, and to postwar continuity with some of its practices. Thus, while all five films refuse to discuss class and ideology as an important part of the politics and society of those years, the Zampa–Brancati trilogy offers a much sharper and more resentful reading of the political

solutions to Italy's problems. In particular, Brancati's influence forces Zampa's main characters to make a choice, while the Roman director's other works rely in a more banal and ambiguous fashion on the idea of the *povero Cristo* (the poor Christ): a poor and downtrodden man, weak and predestined to lose whatever the circumstances; a scrupulous and fundamentally good man ever bound to miss the opportunities seized by others; an unlucky man trapped in uncomfortable, sometimes tragic positions that he has no option of avoiding.

This is the case of Uncle Tigna, the protagonist of *Vivere in Pace*: although he has no doubts about helping the American soldiers he finds in his stables, and although he does not even entertain the idea of informing the Germans, he does nevertheless just find the escapees, where his nephews – not he – had hidden them. Tigna does not seek to take sides; rather he prays not to have to, perhaps in an atavistic peasant wisdom that his lot will always lose out through politics: his harvests and livestock will be commandeered, his fields trampled or burnt, his children conscripted to furnish the battlefield. The same annoyed angst applies to his relationship with the young, draft-dodging partisan Franco: Tigna has no intention of helping the Resistance but nevertheless he tolerates him, begrudgingly but ultimately affectionately. And, as for Tigna, in *Anni Ruggenti*, 15 years later, it is only a comedy of errors that politicises Omero Battifiori, the Roman insurance broker at the centre of that story: the realisation of the consequences of his neutrality finally shakes him from the torpor of his equidistant survivalism. In comparison, the main characters co-written with Brancati – Aldo Piscitello in *Anni Difficili*, Prof. Luigi De Francesco in *Anni Facili* and Sasà Scimoni in *L'Arte di Arrangiarsi* – appear more aware of the choices before them. Whether they take them enthusiastically and opportunistically, like the third of these men, or resentfully, in spite of their own moral code, like the former two, their choices carry and invite a more refined and more morally committed judgement.

Unlike the neorealists' predominantly political and ideological anti-Fascism, which articulated its critique around a struggle for social and economic justice, Zampa and Brancati's anti-Fascism is primarily a moral one. Even compared with Rossellini's Catholic, humanitarian and morally charged works, which nevertheless recognised and at times exalted the leading role of the anti-Fascist parties, Zampa's five films stand out as wary of politics and politicians, disillusioned, suspicious of Marxism, deeply inspired by Catholic morality but not at all by the Christian Democrats. Zampa and Brancati's films invariably condemn the elites, avid, cowardly and opportunistic, and focus on the common

man – always a man – often assigning him similar traits: a judgement, however, which is always tinged with compassion and offset by punishments that the elites invariably escape. Even Sasà, the most ruthless and unsympathetic of Zampa and Brancati's protagonists, ultimately pays for his vices.

The works of Zampa, both on his own and in the partnership with Brancati, are thus singled out by a series of tensions: they are Catholic but not clerical or Christian Democratic; they critique social injustice but shun a class-based analysis of inequality. Theirs is a conservative and moralistic reading of Fascist Italian society which ultimately focuses on Italy's national character, not on Fascism. That explains their consistent and rare focus both on pre-war Fascism and on continuity between pre- and postwar Italy: a focus which allows them to poke fun at power and privilege, sympathise with the pathetic and downtrodden, and articulate a moral, rather than an ideological, critique of those years. And yet, just as it informs these films with unexpected insights, the focus on Italian long-term trends also imbues them with their most serious contradiction: the attempt to reconcile the innate goodness of Italians with an equally inevitable moral cowardice.

On the one hand, Tigna, Piscitello, De Francesco, Sasà and Omero, their children and spouses, and through them their communities, represent simultaneously the cinematic building blocks of the *brava gente* myth. As Brancati wrote:

> The people that inhabit these towns, full of stairways and courtyards, dense with terraces, turrets, windows and balconies, draws from its millenary experience, from its tragedies and its efforts, the deep and simple intelligence that is called: common sense. The humblest among them – those who are ignored in the village square because nobody knows their name – lovingly guard their sense of truth and justice, and suffer bitter pains when this sense is offended, or wounded.[6]

On the other hand, the unforgiving critique of widespread corruption, selfishness and rhetoric charges these same individuals and communities with a share in the responsibility for the political disasters of clientelism, opportunism and, most of all, conformity.

How can these be reconciled? Maybe they should not be, but arguably the answer is that Zampa and Brancati do so by hinting at two further faultlines: one between what we might call *brava gente* (decent people) and *brave persone* (decent persons); the other between Italian instincts

and Italian actions. The latter dichotomy is evident in almost all the five chief characters of Zampa's historical quintet: perhaps with the exception of Sasà, the other four invariably know what the correct choice is, whether or not they take it – like Tigna and Omero – or find it too hard a path to undertake – like Piscitello and De Francesco. Arguably, the voiceovers that punctuate *L'Arte di Arrangiarsi* suggest that even Sasà possesses the same discernment, even though he invariably misses the opportunity to be selfless. The former faultline is more complex, as it involves a careful and ambiguous distinction between national character and what we might call, borrowing and adapting Barbara Rosenwein's concept of 'emotional community',[7] a moral community shared by all but only applied on a personal basis. Navigating these tricky waters left Zampa and Brancati open to the inclemencies of postwar Italian political posturing, accusations from the right of being anti-Italian and from the left of being *qualunquista*,[8] that most untranslatable and overused of Italian epithets, adored particularly by the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary left.

The right attacked viciously especially *Anni Difficili* and *Anni Facili*, while *L'Arte di Arrangiarsi* was targeted by the censors without the controversy spilling onto the parliamentary hemicycles. On 17 August 1948, a fortnight before *Anni Difficili* was due to be screened at the Venice Film Festival, censors of the IV commission of the *Ufficio di Revisione Cinematografica* (Office for Cinematographic Revision) considered the film's application for a censorship visa.

> On the day 17 August 1948 the IV Commission, the representative of the Ministry of Justice being absent, has assessed the film entitled *Anni Difficili*. Judging the film to be offensive of the Italian people, the Commission has resolved not to take a position in its regard.[9]

Their response was paradigmatic of an ambiguous and secretive attitude to censorship delineated as much by private negotiations, phone calls to film sets and backroom deals as by policy: finding the film offensive they took no action, or rather presumably took the action of asking the boss; hence this handwritten note on the reverse of an official document, polemically lamenting the order from the top:

> The film has been considered by the Fourth Commission [of the Office for Cinematographic Revision] which did not take any decision. By order of the Director General [the film] has been admitted to public circulation. 25 September 1948.

> And for exportation? I should think not! [sic] At least that!
>
> De Tommasi.[10]

This semi-secretive approach, heavily reliant on incentives to self-censorship and not immune to practices resembling intimidation and blackmail,[11] had members of the opposition complain constantly of a shameful continuity between the practices of the Fascist regime and of those who followed it in power. They had a point: in 1948, De Gasperi's government reinstated as *Segretario Generale dello Spettacolo* (General Secretary for Entertainment) Nicola De Pirro, former member of the Fascist squads decorated with the Lictorial Scarf, who had previously been in charge of theatre under Mussolini. In the same years, other formerly purged Fascist officials were ushered back into old and new jobs: Gianni De Tommasi, former manager of the *Ministero della Cultura Popolare* (Ministry of Popular Culture, or *Minculpop*) and like De Pirro a *squadrista* and Lictorial Scarf, became chief of division at the Office of Cinematographic Revision, as did Annibale Scicluma Sorge, a Maltese Fascist who had been the *Minculpop's* man charged with referring directly to the Duce. With them Benito Orta, in charge of the exportation of Italian films, and Luigi Natale, head of general affairs, both Lictorial scarves, and Giorgio Nelson Page, American citizen and devotee of Mussolini, a veteran of the March on Rome, who oversaw *Minculpop's* foreign-language propaganda and, after a stint in jail, would be hired at the postwar ministry's press office.[12]

Anni Difficili was lucky for a number of reasons: first, it came out in 1948, still a year of political flux, before the 1949 Andreotti Law could rationalise and entrench Christian democratic policy towards cinema, its funding and censorship[13]; second, Zampa's film was not Communist – indeed, it attracted much criticism from the left; third, perhaps not unrelated to the previous point, *Anni Difficili* found a surprisingly sensitive sponsor in Giulio Andreotti himself, the 29-year-old undersecretary to the President of the Council of Ministers and rising star of the DC. Andreotti was in all likelihood behind De Pirro's 25 September order to issue a censorship visa to *Anni Difficili* and, on 27 November, he gave an impassioned and rational defence to Christian Democratic senators' questions:

> Q. [does the minister] believe it to be necessary to prevent the repetition of the less than edifying spectacle that occurs in cinemas throughout Italy through films, [...] which speculate on the fatherland's miseries and ostentatiously broadcast its ugliest and most

> depressing aspects. Such screenings [...] offend morality and even more the dignity of a people which is struggling so hard to lift itself from its misadventures.
>
> A. [...] I believe it is necessary to say that it is absolutely improper to charge this film [*Anni Difficili*] with offending national dignity. The film is an exposition of common situations and emotions performed with remarkable sense of measure and a light touch. It is the story of a poor devil who pays the price for political developments: unfortunately this is a scenario that many Italians have known and it may be a rare occasion in which each of us, be they Fascist, anti-Fascist or a-Fascist [sic] can feel part of this experience.[14]

Five years later, Brancati and Zampa reunited to work on a virtual sequel: *Anni Facili* tells the story of a high school professor who moves from Sicily to Rome in order to indulge his family's dreams of upward social mobility. Employed as a lobbyist by a Sicilian drug manufacturer, the good professor will ultimately be the only one to pay for the corruption of politicians, civil servants and industrialists. Even Andreotti could not protect *Anni Facili*, as the censors judged that the film 'offends the prestige of public servants and of the judicial system' and forbade its distribution pending a number of changes.[15] A month later, in October 1953, the requests had been met, but the Commission issued two further conditions: the deletion of a scene in which parliamentarians mentioned the Trieste question, and the modification of the following line: 'as a representative, do you have full powers?' was amended to 'as a representative, are you acting on someone's authority?', 'Authority, of course!',[16] presumably to avoid the uncomfortable symbolic legacy of the plenipotentiary, a role associated with the previous regime.[17]

In November 1953 the Socialist senator Amilcare Locatelli brought the issue to the legislative branch.[18] Six months later, with the film finally in circulation, it was the turn of the neofascists to question the government, this time criticising the generosity of the censors towards a film that mocked 'soldiers who were led by moral and social values'.[19] The right were particularly critical of the film because it represented a secret meeting of Fascists in a castle outside Rome, so similar to an event organised by Marshal Rodolfo Graziani in Arcinazzo, in 1952, that the former leader of Italian forces in North Africa took the producers to court, briefly obtaining the film's seizure,[20] conveniently enacted by the court during the month of November 1953, when the new censorship requests had delayed the film's release anyway. But it was not the mockery of the past regime which concerned the authorities, but that of corrupt

and incompetent civil servants. The parliamentary debates continued intermittently until 1957, when questions were still being put to the government in relation to *Anni Facili*'s visa for overseas distribution,[21] a prohibition again reiterated in June 1956: 'the Commission expressed contrary opinion to the distribution of the film abroad because it could generate erroneous and damaging assessments of our country.'[22]

Even as the 2790 metres of film that formed *Anni Facili* sat in an office, the filmmakers worked on their next film, *L'Arte di Arrangiarsi*, which replaced the understated pathetic charge of both Umberto Spadaro and Nino Taranto (the leads in *Anni Difficili* and *Anni Facili*) with the bombastic comedic appeal of Alberto Sordi. *L'Arte di Arrangiarsi* tracks Sasà Scimoni from the 1910s to the 1950s, as he navigates Liberal, Fascist and Republican Italy with only one concern: his wealth and comfort. The change in tone, less grave than their previous two efforts, did not help Zampa and Brancati, however, either with the censors or with a customarily patronising press.[23] *L'Arte di Arrangiarsi* did not reach the Parliament's floor, for three reasons: first, 1954, unlike 1953, was not an election year – the 1953 campaign being especially bitterly combatted[24]; second, in 1953 the synergy of Graziani's lawsuit, the military trial against Guido Aristarco and Renzo Renzi's *L'Armata S'Agapò*,[25] and the government's censorship provided the left with an opportunity to link Fascism, the military and the Christian Democrats in a way that could not be achieved a year later; third, the requests made by the Office of Cinematographic Revision to the 1954 film would have confirmed that the censorship of *Anni Facili*, too, had little to do with the representation of Fascism and neofascism, as I have suggested above, thus making it counterproductive for the left to espouse its cause. In fact, the changes demanded of *L'Arte di Arrangiarsi* were consistent with the censors' brief, which was not to rewrite the past but to protect the integrity of the DC and the Church.

> The present visa is released on 22 December 1954 on the following conditions: to eliminate the expression *puttaniare* [to solicit prostitutes] from the conversation between Sasà and the Duke; to eliminate any mention of the Vatican from the conversation between the Duke and Santucci; to remove the expressions 'a minority councillor' and 'a high-ranking official'. Such references could engender generalisations and erroneous interpretations.[26]

The requested amendments were concentrated in the very last scenes of the film, when Sasà attempts to buy planning permission from a series

of corrupt Rome city engineers and councillors: a topical endeavour indeed, as abusive developments and corrupt practices were the norm during the capital's rapid expansion in the 1950s and 1960s. The censors' demands were met promptly,[27] alongside some other small changes that do not appear to have been formally solicited but are consistent enough with the official request to warrant at least a suspicion of a further, this time informal, demand. First, the sentence 'these are all illicit constructions, allowed only through acts of corruption' disappeared from the scene in which Casagrande, a young Communist filmmaker, pitches his film to Sasà[28]; second, the set piece in which the wealthy friends seek a dispensation from an Archbishop in order to eat meat (that they have already cooked) on a Friday was cut[29]; third, the expression 'high-ranking official', already amended to 'official', became 'an esteemed professional' in a third version of the script which also lost the sentence 'winner of a most difficult public selection, thanks to academic qualifications and exam results'.[30] Brancati died three days after lodging his typewritten screenplay with the Office of Cinematographic Revision, and this now sits alongside two others in the ministry's archives as a memorial to the Sicilian writer's work and to the clerical paranoia of Christian Democratic bureaucrats. It would take eight years before Zampa went back to the theme of Fascism.

The left mounted an impassioned defence of Zampa against a resurgent censorship,[31] but forgot that they had themselves vehemently dismissed *Anni Difficili* in 1948. In particular, that film divided the Communist Party: senior party members, such as Emilio Sereni and deputy secretary Pietro Secchia, traded blows from the columns of *Vie Nuove*, the PCI's magazine. Sereni wrote:

> [let us] not forget that what imperialists today want is not to hide the ugliness of Fascism and of the war, which cannot be hidden, [...] but to represent this reality in such a way that simple men will convince themselves that there is no way out of this horror and so one might as well wallow in it, because thus it has been and thus it always will.[32]

Sereni was not wrong, but he had chosen the wrong target; Italo Calvino, no less, was among those who would have suggested this, but his review was denied publication by the Turin edition of *L'Unità*; in it he had written:

> Piscitello saves himself from fatalism and sterility only when he latches on to History. [...] I do not agree with those who have

> defined *Anni Difficili* '*qualunquista*'. On the contrary, it seems to me the epitome of a film that is *antiqualunquista*.[33]

The problems, as far as many Communists more orthodox than Calvino were concerned, were in the film's characterisation of the Fascists as corrupt rather than evil, in its ridicule of the anti-Fascists, in its complete overlooking of the class system and, most of all, in its depiction of 1920s and 1930s Italy as overwhelmingly supportive of Fascism. In 1948, *Anni Difficili*'s bleak reading of Italy's Fascist *ventennio* undermined the Resistancialist narrative even as it was being written. *Anni Difficili*, the only film of the quintet actively to represent elements of armed guerrilla, shows an Italian–American saboteur, not the sophisticated underground movement that neorealist films like *Roma Città Aperta* so indelibly enshrined in Italian and international discourses on the Resistance. But then no one conceded that the film was set in Sicily, where the war ended early, even before Mussolini was first deposed, a year before Rome, two years before Milan or Turin. The Resistance there did not exist, but this historical detail was insignificant in the overall reconstruction of Italy's anti-Fascist credentials and, through them, of its national pride.

Left-wing critics, notwithstanding the narrow ideological gaze, had a point: they rebelled against the line the film drew between common people and the elites, defining the latter so broadly that the distinction effectively no longer worked. The Socialist daily *Avanti!* argued that this was a cynical and dangerous 'illustration of the philosophy according to which Italians want to live in peace, left alone by both Fascists and anti-Fascists, that they are all dishonest ruffians'.[34] Lorenzo Quaglietti, film critic of *L'Unità*'s Rome edition, wrote:

> The film's thesis [is that] all Italians were cowards because they allowed the advent of Fascism. [...] The director's intent was to construct an alibi, at the cost of insulting all Italians, to save those who were the true and only guilty parties for two decades of dictatorship.[35]

Quaglietti was talking about Brancati's youthful Fascism, and the Sicilian novelist knew this was coming. In his presentation of the film at the Venice Film Festival he wrote:

> I hope that this comedy of manners will not be read as an accusation against all Italians, but rather as a shared confession, because I, too, took part in the same comedy... [sic] To laugh of one's defects is the

> best virtue of civilised peoples; in fact, I will say more: the clearest sign of said civilisation is that it does not leave it to others to lay bare those defects.[36]

Brancati's defence sanctioned the filmmakers' ambiguity rather than laying the debate to rest. There is no doubt that Zampa and Brancati's films, and particularly Zampa's solo films, flirted with and at times slid into an all-too-easy rejection of politics that, in satirising the lack of change, risked affirming its inevitability and, effectively, desensitising viewers to it, even helping them accept it. In the context of postwar Italy, after 20 years of dictatorship, political commitment was – and would long remain – paramount, almost sacred as far as the left was concerned: in that context, failing to advocate for political commitment amounted to defending the status quo (and defending the status quo was tantamount to Fascist apologia!). Those were indeed the ingredients of *qualunquismo*, and a difficult line to toe: if virtually all Italians shared the vices of selfishness and cowardice, were Fascists and anti-Fascists the same?

In *Vivere in Pace* and *Anni Ruggenti*, in particular, the main characters pull back from the brink of ideological equidistance only just in time, through endings that seem as abrupt as they are powerful, clearly dissonant from the films' main body. In the former, Zio Tigna, who has otherwise avoided politics, at the death refuses to help the German soldier desert, literally laying down his life on a matter of principle, instinctively following ancient values of solidarity and common sense. When he denies civilian clothing to the hapless Hans on behalf of all those who had died or suffered at the hands of Germans less benign than him, Aldo Fabrizi forsakes Tigna and reprises his role as Don Pietro, the Catholic priest of *Roma Città Aperta*: he is an avenger whose only weapons are righteousness and resignation so stoic as to unsettle even the unshakeable beliefs of the master race. In a similar way, Omero's final encounter with the desperate poverty of the peasants in *Anni Ruggenti*, resulting in his rejecting the advantages of his mistaken position and even the hand of the woman he loved, represents a realisation, as sudden as it is belated, that indirect responsibility is nevertheless a dire indictment: the violent zoom out of the final shot, which uncovers him alone and changed, is tantamount to the gaze of the downtrodden, the lives of others he had thought himself detached from. Tigna's and Omero's are late conversions, emotionally powerful moments of personal agency but nevertheless too abrupt to amend significantly the films' anti-political messages.

Notwithstanding these examples, it was harsh then and it would be misguided now to tar Zampa and Brancati's careful, in many ways brave and sensitive, postwar works with the brush of *qualunquismo*. While they were not *engagé* in a party-political sense, Zampa and Brancati were not *qualunquisti* either, because they judged *qualunquismo* mercilessly. Political opportunism, intellectual dishonesty, failure to invest in an ethical code and remain true to it, all these form, in the artists' analysis, the original sin of Italian society. These moral shortcuts bring perdition to those who actively seek them, mostly the cunning and powerful, and ruin to those naïve or weak individuals who undertake them reluctantly. In all five films, ambition is severely condemned, but survivalism is shown to be an equally doomed path. Thus Zampa and Brancati chastise Aldo Piscitello's status-seeking wife and daughter, tabloid Fascists fascinated by the regime's glossy pomp and cheap promises of grandeur, but also condemn Tigna's wife, for example, who wishes for a quiet life without pushing her husband into Fascist party membership. Greed is a sin, but one's own quiet life entails another's persecution. This moral code is reaffirmed throughout these five films, and punishment, either farcical or tragic, is meted out consistently: Tigna loses his life, his wife her husband; the Piscitellos lose their virtuous son; Prof. De Francesco and Sasà Scimoni lose their freedom, and Omero his innocence.

There are two keys to unlocking the complexity of Zampa and Brancati's analysis of Italian society: the first is the representation of Fascism and Fascists; the second the role that the family plays in their films. These two elements reveal the paradox of the films' simultaneous collective condemnation and collective exoneration of Fascist Italy and, at the same time, help us explain some of the left's early uneasiness with Zampa and Brancati's work, highlighting some of its concerns but also exposing them as shallow and ultimately reactionary.

The first and most important aspect is the way all five films effectively depoliticise Fascism. The Fascist regime appears consistently to exist in an ideological void, populated by *arrivistes* and those who have long ago arrived, elites in defence of privilege. In the absence of an ideological framework or a vision of society, Fascist Italy is distinguished only by pomp and rhetoric. Indeed, this unusual representation is proven by, and simultaneously justifies, Zampa and Brancati's preference for the *longue dureé*, the family sagas within which they move, especially in *L'Arte di Arrangiarsi*, from the Liberal period to the Christian Democratic one. The suggested continuity that sets these films apart in the Italian historiophoty of Fascism would not have been as easy to achieve without the refusal to acknowledge the fundamental differences between

political systems. Certainly in Zampa's trilogy with Brancati this broad brush appears to be the result of a genuine disillusionment and, almost certainly, of personal experience and observation.

However, even as it is invaluable in revealing a degree of socio-economic and bureaucratic continuity between Fascist and post-Fascist Italy, this approach is also historically and politically flawed. Where, in fact, are the Fascists? Opportunistic membership is, of course, amply represented here, as are attendance at rallies and belief in the populist promises of the regime, but these are the gullible and the conformists, sometimes the coerced. These are undoubtedly important sectors of Fascist popularity, but they do not reflect the actual support for the Duce and the genuine, if tragically misguided, belief that his vision – of imperial expansion, for example – would deliver a better future.

Hence a succession of characters emerges for whom Fascism is a vehicle for personal aggrandisement or a nuisance, not political choice. In *Vivere in Pace* the only Fascist is the village secretary, who is not actually Fascist in the end: he is pathetic, ridiculous, a comic stereotype in the neorealist mould; a big fish in a tiny pond enjoying and abusing privilege and corruption because he will always find 'somebody to pay his bills', as the anti-Fascist doctor puts it. Given the difference already exposed between the neorealist representations of Fascists and Nazis, it is worth noting here that in *Vivere in Pace* at least the village's one German is similarly buffoonish, although his relative naivety cannot absolve him of his nation's crimes. It is also interesting that Zampa does not extend this fate to Italians, a detail that coincides well with the ultimate Italian goodness already discussed. In *Anni Difficili*, Brancati's influence tones down Zampa's melodramatic and romantic view of Italians, and the Fascists are more nuanced. The local *Podestà*, the town's administrative head, is cunning and long-sighted, opportunistically and obsequiously exploiting first Fascism, then the American occupation, for private aims. The town's political authority, the *Federale*, is fanatically Fascist but ultimately ineffectual and marginalised: in his final scramble to save himself he reconnects with the stereotype of the pathetic black shirt. In *L'Arte di Arrangiarsi* the comic element is more explicit: when the Fascist government outlaws duels, Sasà's sudden ideological zeal is a convenient survival tactic, much like his other conversions to Socialism, Capitalism, Communism and Catholicism. Finally, the Fascists in *Anni Ruggenti* are a mix of civilian authorities and black shirts, none of whom show any political consistency: as we will see in the next chapters, *Anni Ruggenti* belongs to the early 1960s' resurgence of Fascism and Resistance-themed films in which Fascist characters inherited

the buffoonish traits of their neorealist cousins, albeit stripped of the bitter and therapeutic ridicule that proximity to the events originally conferred on them.

Perhaps a separate point should be made for Omero, the young Roman insurance broker who inadvertently causes the provincial elites to panic. Omero is a product of the Fascist system in which he grew up: he is a keen gymnast and his polished virility of body and spirit is the very reason the mistaken identity can take place. Omero looks like an undercover Fascist leader, or at least he looks like Fascist rhetoric would suggest that such a man should look. This gives him the potential of originality, because Omero is an Italian Fascist who is neither opportunistic nor gullible, neither pathetic nor fanatical, but an average, lower-middle-class Italian product of Fascist society. Nevertheless, Omero is also apolitical: he knows all the gestures and formulae but he does not really care for them – and not only after the catharsis induced in him by the peasants' desperation, but also much earlier, for example when he apologises to the local anti-Fascists for his words of support for the regime: 'I did not know; I farewell you in Roman fashion,' he states, but then performs a Roman dialect salutation, '*se vedemo*,' ('so long'), rather than a Roman salute with outstretched arm (Figure 4.1).

The five films do depart from the orthodoxy in places, not least in addressing the 1920s and 1930s, decades mostly forgotten by neorealism. *Anni Difficili* in particular stands out in this respect, acknowledging Italy's wars in Africa and Spain, as well as World War Two before 8 September 1943. However, the representation of Fascists and Fascism in these five films is ultimately consistent with early postwar narratives: the regime is a hollow container for a variety of greedy men, bullies, their victims and assorted lowlifes; there is hardly any real violence towards opponents. Notwithstanding the fact that Zampa and Brancati unequivocally accord the regime the responsibility for the moral degradation of a nation and the death and destruction of World War Two, their version of Fascism is a relatively harmless regime, more ceremonial than political.

Where Zampa and Brancati's films differ more stridently from other neorealist films is in extending the negative characteristics of Fascist Italians to anti-Fascist Italians. Cowardice, conformism, selfishness, ideological and moral ambiguity, and a degree of elitism all apply across the five films to Socialists, Liberals, Communists, Republicans and, of course, Catholics. Gone is the granitic certainty of one's righteousness evident in Don Pietro, Manfredi and just about any other neorealist Resistance leader; gone with it is the instinctive righteousness of Pina,

Figure 4.1 Omero Battifiori showcases his Fascist skills to the future generation in *Anni Ruggenti*
Source: Courtesy of Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.

Francesco and their fellow working-class partisans. They had no doubt, or if in doubt took the right path, while Zampa's anti-Fascists almost always choose not to choose or to choose too late, to compromise or to remain silent. The distance between the two is significant: Zampa and Brancati's anti-Fascists are casualties not only of an approach so suspicious of politicians as to depict them as all the same, but also of a more pointed critique. In *Vivere in Pace* the opposition to the regime basically does not exist, consisting of one draft-dodger; in *Anni Facili* and *L'Arte di Arrangiarsi* they are openly corrupt; in *Anni Difficili* the anti-Fascists are divided, squabbling among themselves, and, worse than pusillanimous, they are recklessly brave with other people's lives. The chilling scene in which the small group of anti-Fascist old men, comfortable members of a professional bourgeoisie, rejoice at Italy's war defeats while Piscitello's son is fighting at the front is telling of Zampa and Brancati's seeming disdain for all political parties.

The result is a unique and grave indictment, but also a simplistic, unfair and at times disconcerting equidistance. By demystifying, almost

humiliating organised anti-Fascism, and simultaneously not acknowledging any genuinely convinced Fascists, the films ultimately suggest that Italy was never actually Fascist and, in so doing, perpetuate a version of the *brava gente* stereotype. Admittedly, Zampa and Brancati's Italians, overwhelmingly selfish, cowardly and conformist, live a life of subsistence on the border of that stereotype, but they are *brava gente* nonetheless, who retain their humanity, some fundamental Christian values, and pay a heavy price in their own skin and that of their families. Although martyrdom virtually disappears, victimhood is arguably as central to these stories as to the neorealist ones.

The family embodies and reconciles these negative and positive characteristics and represents the second key to understanding the contradictions in Zampa and Brancati's approach. From *Vivere in Pace* right through to *Anni Ruggenti*, but also further, in other Zampa films less directly concerned with the Fascist period, such as *L'Onorevole Angelina* (*Angelina*, 1947), family life is a crucial counterpoint to political life. In Zampa, the family is the last retreat, a moral institution carrying inherent ethical value, a social institution representing the community's primary building block and a cultural institution that, through the education of future generations, may have held the only chance of an Italian rebirth. The only things that make Tigna act deliberately and with purpose are his family and his land, which in his mindset we may well consider one and the same. He chastises the young draft-dodging partisan because his dreams of easy riches have driven him away from his father's farm; in his conversation with the American soldier and journalist, he laments the loss of his sister to dreams of cosmopolitanism, before asking him to leave her daughter, his niece, to a more appropriate future on the land. For the bumbling Tigna, who mostly seems haplessly to suffer the world outside his farm as an unnecessary nuisance, these are rare moments of gravity that foreshadow and in many ways explain his final stance. Elsewhere, Anna Magnani's lead character in *L'Onorevole Angelina* shuns a parliamentary seat to focus on her family, which risks being upset by the unusual reversal of gender roles within it. Angelina chooses the family and the reassuring, if daunting, task of ensuring its moral and physical health over what Zampa considers the suspicious chimeras of politics and class solidarity; this decision is consistent with Zampa's moralist approach and with the anti-political discourse of the five films discussed in this chapter.

Even as they exalt the traditional family and its conservative social and gender values, however, Zampa's films consistently show familism

as the basis of Italy's lack of civic responsibility: from *Vivere in Pace* to *Anni Ruggenti*, the primacy of the family over the community is now an excuse to accumulate greedily, now the national alibi not to stand up to injustice. In *Anni Difficili*, when Piscitello mourns the loss of his son he is actually lamenting more generally the loss of the family as an institution that can contain both dedication to one's own and solidarity with one's fellow man. That is the price of the choice Piscitello and countless others made, to privilege short-term survival over long-term justice; that 'much higher' cost is what he refers to when the US soldier asks him if 2000 Lire had been a fair price for his disused Fascist militia uniform, instantly flogged by his younger sons. The well-being of the family as supreme individual concern leads to seeking or accepting handouts from a vertical chain of economic privilege that clearly prevents any prospect of establishing a responsible and fair society, free of privilege. In other words, familism and clientelism rely on each other, and thus the former cannot be the solution to the latter.

It is relatively easy to see a measure of contradiction here: how can the family be both the way into and the way out of trouble? Several considerations can help us refine and ultimately comprehend this apparent paradox. The first clarification is that the family's dual role as a simultaneously corrupting and cathartic force is not equally evident in all five films. In the films that involved Brancati, *Anni Difficili*, *Anni Facili* and *L'Arte di Arrangiarsi*, the catharsis is in fact non-existent: the endings are bleak and the integrity of the family is compromised, its survival jeopardised; in *L'Arte di Arrangiarsi*, the family is alternatively either a myth (for the Socialist couple Sasà breaks up), a tribal client base (for the corrupt Sicilian aristocrat) or a means of social mobility (for Sasà himself). Even when the well-being of one's family, rather than greed, genuinely moves the characters, most notably for Piscitello and De Francesco, their efforts are rewarded with ruin. As discussed, this is not the case in *Vivere in Pace* and *L'Onorevole Angelina*, which retain the nuclear family as an intimate and innocent model, or, in some respects, even in *Anni Ruggenti*. The second consideration to make is that, even when the family retains both roles in the films, this is by no means an implausible argument: in Italian history the family has indeed played many roles apart from that of perpetuating clientelism, often filling a void, where the state failed in matters of welfare, for instance. It may even be argued that the primacy of the family simultaneously aided the rise of Fascism, by preventing dissent, and provided some of the antibodies necessary to withstand totalitarianism by providing a constant

pole of allegiance and thus ensuring a relatively smooth transition to democracy.

If this is true, then, the paradox in Zampa and Brancati's analysis may be a sign of honesty, rather than ambiguity. Even so, the charge of *qualunquismo* continued to be laid against them. The reason lies in their refusal to propose a solution: whether they advocate a retreat into traditional family values or simply refuse to elaborate any ideological framework for the post-Fascist era, the filmmakers did not fit easily into a highly militant and expectant postwar. When Zampa saved the family, his analysis appeared doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past, his recipe unable to take on the petty self-interests that prevented real change; when, with Brancati, he removed even the family from his answer, he remained so bitterly sceptical of any political model, of any ideology, as to suggest an underlying apolitical, and therefore anti-democratic, charge.

Depicting political parties as inherently corrupt and ineffectual in a period of mass mobilisation, mass party membership, and intense, and often fruitful, political debate was a dangerous choice, and probably an unfair one. The anti-Fascist political parties had seized the momentum with the Resistance and shown leadership and competence in the transition to democracy. Despite barely tolerable socio-economic conditions at home and a fluctuating and ominous international situation culminating in the Cold War, Italian Christian Democrats, Communists, Socialists and Conservatives had worked together to write the new and progressive Republican Constitution of 1947. In that same year the Marshall Plan had sanctioned the end of the national unity government, and in 1948 the Christian Democrats had convincingly won hotly contested elections, while the PCI had once more proved its commitment to democracy through its composed reaction to the attempted murder of its leader, Palmiro Togliatti.[37]

Eerily far-sighted as it may sound today, in the immediate postwar years many Italians would have been offended by the suggestion that political parties were power bases concerned with self-promotion and the retention of privilege. Disillusionment did creep in, rather fast, and by the Christian Democrats' electoral law reform of 1953, the so-called *legge truffa* or 'fraud law', it had well and truly set in. It is rather telling in that respect that the left's outrage against *Anni Difficili*, in 1948, had turned into impassioned defence of free speech by the time *Anni Facili* had waded through six censorship revisions, in 1953. But, even as the accusations of *qualunquismo* switched from left-wing newspapers to Catholic MPs, Italians continued to believe and participate in politics:

their scepticism was targeted at the opposing party, not at politics in general.

Zampa and Brancati's anti-political discourse did not resonate in Cold War Italy for one final and crucial reason: it eschewed any analysis of class. While social class, income levels and education by no means coincided with political belonging or voting habits, the Marxist-inspired reading of the Fascist years which dominated neorealist narratives did equate Fascism with an elite-driven attempt to retain privilege and obstruct the proletariat's struggle for control of their own destiny. Such a reading was correct inasmuch as it interpreted Mussolini's rise to power as an essentially reactionary event supported by those sectors interested in retaining the socio-economic status quo and deeply fearful of a socialist revolution, but it was wilfully simplistic in neglecting Mussolini's appeal among the lower strata of society, especially in the South and in rural areas. More than a Communist party-political principle, in fact, the good, anti-Fascist working class represented a testament to a collective and intrinsic anti-Fascism, now beaten into submission, now bribed into silence, now isolated into conformism. Regardless of the two decades of dictatorship, regardless of the crowds in Piazza Venezia or the rhetoric of Empire, a core of Italian virtue remained.

By removing class as a political determinant, films like *Anni Difficili* and *Anni Facili* and to a lesser extent *L'Arte di Arrangiarsi* not only upset the Communist neorealist orthodoxy but also, more importantly, removed a national safety net. Cynicism and moral rage, all Brancati's, indeed gave these films their disarming edge, while *Vivere in Pace* and *Anni Ruggenti* retained a faith in the peasantry, which reinforced the *brava gente* myth and undermined their potential. Although the critique of conformism involves the peasantry too, there is a degree of orientalism in these films' analysis of rural Italy: particularly in *Anni Ruggenti*, but also to an extent in the petty peasant purgatory of *Vivere in Pace*, workers of the land are inherently good. In the collaboration with Brancati that is less evident, because the ethical charge of the stories is more directly aimed at society and politics.

Zampa and Brancati ignore class as an issue, in terms of both intra-class consciousness and inter-class relations. Even as they praise peasant common sense, they ignore work practices and the role that the same brand of bucolic wisdom played in the perpetuation of injustices. However, in *Anni Difficili* and *Anni Facili* this does not seem to be a facile conservative political strategy, but rather the deliberate result of Brancati's Sicilianness. He brings to the screen a social model which is completely different from the large cities of Rome, Naples, Genoa

or Milan, immortalised by De Sica or Rossellini. Brancati's Sicilians appear much more ancient than the proletariat: they are informed by feudal, not industrial, relations; vertical, personal and familial relationships, rather than horizontal, class ones, rule their lives; their lot is not exploitation but personal submission. Hence the ignoring of class consciousness lamented by *L'Unità* in 1948 was not entirely a snub towards Marxist sociological analysis but also a sociological reflection on Brancati's Sicily.

There is an anti-Marxist political element there, as is to be expected from a Liberal conservative such as Brancati. Gramscian theory, which inspired much Marxist analysis of the Italian South – and neorealist films such as Luchino Visconti's *La Terra Trema* (1947), which sought to translate Gramsci onto the screen – demonstrated amply that it is possible to read the conditions of the Sicilian poor within a capitalist framework, though exacerbated by the absence of the state and the consequent control of the territory by a criminal para-state.[38] This is certainly absent in Zampa's films. Nevertheless, Brancati's Piscitello, Prof. De Francesco and Sasà are all middle-class men with a vested interest and a role to play in modern Italy, not Visconti's downtrodden fishermen or Carlo Levi's Lucanian peasants in *Cristo Si é Fermato a Eboli* (*Christ Stopped at Eboli*, 1945), or other Southern characters observed by a Northern gaze as ahistorical lives, extensions of land and sea. Thus class leaves its place to choice, a burden with which Brancati charges all his characters. Piscitello, De Francesco, Sasà, all have a choice, and, although the audience may be asked to sympathise with them, whether with the predicament of the first two men or the third's unrepentantly self-interested shifting of political allegiance (a practice Italians call *trasformismo*), it is also left in no doubt of the price of their complicity. Piscitello's final moments of regret indeed make him the most powerful of this group, a rare glimpse of the impossible line between individual responsibilities and civic duties imbued in an Aeschylean sense of inter-generational tragedy.

This tragic charge undoubtedly sets *Anni Difficili*, arguably even more than *Anni Facili*, apart from the other films discussed in this chapter. It is a charge that has simultaneously been responsible for these films' long-term underestimation in critical circles and for their revival in recent times. *Anni Difficili* was restored and screened at the Venice Film Festival in 2008, while *Anni Facili*, alone of Zampa's many films on the war and postwar period, remains almost impossible to find. *Anni Difficili* and *Anni Facili*, while in some ways reinforcing the *brava gente* stereotype and feeding the Italian desire for a narrative of victimhood, confronted their

audiences with a set of difficult questions which the alternating slapstick and pathos of *Vivere in Pace*, *L'Arte di Arrangiarsi* and *Anni Ruggenti* failed to ask. As Alberto Moravia wrote in regard to *Anni Facili*, the relationship between past and present, so crucial to both the 1948 and 1953 films, 'demonstrates once more the weakness of Italy's civic impulse [...] and how the idea persists that certain sections, situations and people of our society are still sacred and untouchable'.[39]

Part III
Reconstruction

5
Clueless Fascists and Accidental Anti-Fascists

Luigi Zampa's 1950s analysis of the war and its aftermath was informed by a society on the cusp of radical change. Having already set aside 20 years of dictatorship and enthusiastically embraced their own kind of representative democracy, Italians set about the reconstruction with the help of American money, newly forged European ties, well-connected governments and an entrepreneurial private sector. Zampa and Brancati observed the early stages of that change and sensed its cardinal principles of consumption and wealth as a threat and, crucially, as an ideal new climate for old Italian vices: selfishness and clientelism above all. In other words, they saw socio-economic and political change as sharing a fundamental continuity with the past in an analysis that, while partial at best, was coherent with the moralist nature of their work, uninterested in economics or class.

Yet, even as they wrote and filmed, in the mid-1950s, Europe was significantly changing. In 1953 Joseph Stalin died, mourned as a father and a saviour by millions of Italian Communists who were shortly to be shocked on learning of his immense crimes.[1] In the same years, six Western European countries, including France and West Germany, signed treaties of closer economic cooperation which would pave the way for the European Union; meanwhile, in 1956, the Soviet Union's brutal repression of Hungary's anti-Communist movement dashed the hopes of many committed progressives who had hoped that Stalin's crimes had been an aberration – perhaps explaining them by way of an extraordinary period of famine, war, occupation and international isolation – and that Nikita Khrushchev's denunciation had been proof of the USSR's genuine commitment to social justice. While many hung on to this hope until at least the Prague Spring of 1968, blaming Hungarian

Fascists or Western disinformation,[2] for some Western Communists the events in Hungary were a point of no return.[3]

Soviet repression in Hungary certainly made it much harder for the Italian left, the PSI and PCI, to revive the united front which had nevertheless comprehensively lost the first democratic elections of April 1948. The PCI continued to toe Moscow's line, while the PSI distanced itself from Soviet Marxism and, in 1957, sanctioned a new strategy away from the alliance with the PCI and towards an inevitable collaboration with the Christian Democrats. These had in turn been orphaned of their charismatic postwar leader, Alcide De Gasperi, who had died in the same year as Stalin. Until the PSI formally joined the Moro government in 1963, the DC had led every Republican government, won every election and yet paradoxically suffered from a chronic failure of a consistent parliamentary majority. Italy's anomaly, based largely on the isolation and effective ineligibility of the largest opposition party, the Communists, created the country's paradigmatic stable instability: 46 years of stable DC domination, yet 48 governments,[4] ever-shifting majorities, so-called seaside cabinets,[5] and all the assorted idiosyncrasies of Italy's political power. To amend this situation, the DC had unsuccessfully pushed through the 'fraud law' of 1953 and, between March and July 1960, had even accepted the support of unapologetic former Fascists in the *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (Italian Social Movement, MSI). In four months, Fernando Tambroni's government risked reawakening a civil war by adopting a repressive and anti-democratic domestic policy, including the violent suppression of opposition rallies and the announcement of new censorship laws after the scandal of Federico Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* (1960).[6] Tambroni was ousted by his own party and by an overwhelming popular protest against authoritarianism.[7]

Such were the circumstances in which Italian film producers and audiences embraced a new wave of films about the Fascist period: many postwar hopes dashed; the country wealthier but in a dramatically uneven fashion; swelling numbers of the bourgeoisie pushing for progressive change against a conservative and Catholic background; a vast internal movement of people replacing emigration; the left disillusioned and divided, doomed to opposition or compromise; the right still threatening, though not quite resurgent; democracy itself revealed in its imperfections to a nation that still cherished its significance. This was quite a set of challenges through which to reinterpret a past which protests against Tambroni had revealed not to be as ancient as new infrastructure, consumer goods, family holidays, television shows (and collective amnesia) might have suggested.

There is much of this historical context in the wave of films which, between 1959 and 1962, revitalised the themes of Fascism, World War Two and the Resistance. The films (more than 40 in the period 1960–63 according to Miccichè,[8] although fewer in Zinni's analysis[9]), which approached themes that had been rare, unpopular and often censored in the 1950s, constitute, thematically and stylistically, a deliberate throwback to neorealism[10]: we will call them here a 'neorealist revival', a term that best summarises the legacy that undoubtedly informed these films, but also their fundamental duplicity towards aesthetic and political aspects of neorealism, honouring and simultaneously undermining it, bringing it back to life only to sanction its demise.

Politically, the films of the neorealist revival were testament to the crystallisation of 'the civic religion' of the Resistance. Yet they also amply played to Italian scepticism and disillusionment, arguably reconciling the opposing tensions of memorialisation and marginalisation to which Gundle has pointed[11]; stylistically, these films attempted to reproduce the effect of neorealism, though, as we will see, the result seldom crept past a hollow homage[12]; commercially, therefore, the neorealist revival was on fairly safe ground because it was patrolling well-known and polished boundaries of content and form and tapping into a topical subject. These films were neither experimental nor provocative; they were in the majority comic; they relied on stars of the old guard, such as Vittorio De Sica and Totò, and of the new, such as Vittorio Gassman, Alberto Sordi and Ugo Tognazzi. Notwithstanding some exceptions, such as Rossellini's two films, *Il Generale della Rovere* (*General della Rovere*, 1959) and *Era Notte a Roma* (*It Was Night in Rome*, 1960), these were *commedie all'italiana*, Italian-style comedies in which war worked as the ideal background to exploit the farcical national idiosyncrasies on which the genre was built: that is, on boastful yet clumsy men, on provocative women, on regional accents and stereotypes, on a gross mismatch between heroes and their task. The war, and in particular the chaos that followed Italy's armistice on 8 September 1943, thus provided ample opportunities to mock class and regional relations and exploit the pathetic intensity of little people caught up in events out of their control.

And ordinary people are just what the films of the neorealist revival were interested in. Almost always male, middle-aged and middle-class, these characters were not the exemplary champions of the disenfranchised and downtrodden in the neorealist mould. A few young idealists, such as David in Lizzani's *L'Oro di Roma* (*The Gold of Rome*, 1961), are outnumbered by a mass of potbellied adults; the ever-present children of

the late 1940s disappear, leaving little or no trace; the brave and lonely neorealist women of the peasantry and urban underclass endow us with few heirs, perhaps with the notable exception of De Sica's *La Ciociara* (*Two Women*, 1960). Instead, the combined leading characters of films such as *Il Generale della Rovere*, *Tutti a Casa* (*Everybody Go Home!*, Luigi Comencini, 1960), *La Marcia su Roma* (*The March on Rome*, Dino Risi, 1962), *La Lunga Notte del '43* (*It Happened in 1943*, Florestano Vancini, 1960), *Era Notte a Roma*, *Il Carro Armato dell'8 Settembre* (*The 8 September Tank*, Gianni Puccini, 1960), and so on, offer an awkward sample of a humanity comfortably struggling. These are the men emasculated by the very war that in Fascist rhetoric should have proved their virility – petty officers without orders, prisoners of war, demobilised veterans, thieves – and the long-suffering women who have to put up with them – young wives wishing they had been widowed (Anna Barilari in *La Lunga Notte del '43*), widows wishing their husbands had returned (Cesira in *La Ciociara*), girls turned black marketeers to make ends meet (Esperia in *Era Notte a Roma*; Caterina in *Tutti a Casa*).

Yet the men of the neorealist revival are also the lower-middle-class protagonists of the Economic Miracle, who were in greater numbers discovering consumption and coming to expect a better standard of living. Bardone in *Il Generale della Rovere* and Jacovacci and Busacca in *La Grande Guerra* (*The Great War*, Mario Monicelli, 1959), the joint winners at the 1959 Venice Film Festival and patriarchs of this new wave of films, are paradigmatic of the anti-heroes that dominate this wave of films. Jacovacci and Busacca are two clumsy World War One soldiers who stumble their way from desertion to heroic death at the hands of an Austrian firing squad. Their comic life and bitter end may be simplistically celebratory of the common man's plight, but they are also anti-rhetorical because they offer little catharsis, only loss. Similarly, in *Il Generale della Rovere* Bardone simultaneously epitomises the conformism and initiative of his nation and his class. His chief characteristics are survivalism and an intense desire to be liked: Bardone changes his posture to charm now the Germans, now the grieving parents he cons with fake news of their captive children, now the guards of San Vittore jail, where the Germans send him to impersonate the dead General della Rovere, a Resistance leader, and thus flush out other partisans. And yet through all of Bardone-della Rovere's personae the scriptwriters managed to retain an uneasy cohabitation of empathy and cynicism which undoubtedly ensured his longevity as a crucial character of Italian film history. Conman, then Nazi spy, and finally Resistance hero in the film's cathartic and irresistibly rhetorical ending, Bardone

is an unlikely martyr who impersonates perfectly the coherent contradictions that define and sustain the *italiani brava gente* myth. All its ingredients are there, and yet General della Rovere's death, fake because it is in fact Bardone who dies, also contains the bitter antidote to the pomposity of its own national stereotype, based once again on the twin martyrdoms of a Communist and a Conservative patriot.[13]

Most leading characters in neorealist revival films follow the same cathartic parable, though not all are as interesting and complex as Bardone, Jacovacci and Busacca. And little does it matter if the comic and escapist tones of these films often commute death into a narrow escape, as in the case of Toto's characters in both *I Due Marescialli* (*The Two Marshals*, Sergio Corbucci, 1961) and *I Due Colonnelli* (*The Two Colonels*, Steno, 1962), Ugo Tognazzi's and Vittorio Gassman's characters in *La Marcia su Roma,* or Alberto Sordi's in *Tutti a Casa*. All these men represent the triumph of survivalism against ideology and yet paradoxically also represent the tension between survivalism and sacrifice, because they almost always convert, and either die or put themselves in harm's way for a cause fundamentally alien to them.

The paradox is explained by the anachronism of these historical films: Bardone, Jacovacci, Busacca and the others are 1960s men, products of the Economic Miracle plunged back into the war. The choices required by their consumerist society have not prepared them for other, more dramatic choices. Thus their sacrifice is hollow compared with the unforgettable neorealist martyrdoms of Don Pietro and Manfredi in *Roma Città Aperta*, for example. By contrast, Bardone's death is melodramatic and touching but politically devoid of both hope and urgency. Not only does he not articulate the political aspect of his sacrifice, but he dies in another man's name and no one will ever even know of his decision.

Zampa's films had foreshadowed the focus on middle-class men and their political corollaries: a dislike of politics; widespread conformism; an ambiguous equilibrium between the *italiani brava gente* myth and collective responsibility. However, if Zampa's 1950s films had foreseen a dramatic change and lamented its elements of continuity with the past, the films of the 1960s were in many ways the product of changes that had already occurred. They were informed by, and commented on, a new Italy in the very midst of the Economic Miracle. Hence they differed considerably from Zampa's films in many regards and in their overall tone, responding as they did to an era of increasing material wealth, of consumerism, of shifting *mores*, and to the popular culture appropriate to them, starting, of course, with television, introduced in 1954 and

quickly becoming a new obsession for Italians.[14] In short, the war films of the early 1960s were no longer informed by the cultural climate of the immediate postwar years.

This crucial difference is borne out in a number of key differences that belie the short chronological span that separates Zampa and Brancati's works from those of Luigi Comencini, Mario Monicelli and Dino Risi, for example. In the first instance, while all of Zampa's films have a comic undertone, their laughter is often bittersweet, always intertwined with tragedy. There is nothing comic in the endings of *Vivere in Pace*, *Anni Difficili*, *Anni Facili* or even *Anni Ruggenti*, for instance, while the fate of Sordi's character in *L'Arte di Arrangiarsi* is only funny because of the unethical coincidence of his rise and demise. In comparison, later films make widespread use of caricature, parody and slapstick, and, although there can be serious moments, such as the endings of *Tutti a Casa* or *La Grande Guerra*, these are appendices: there is a neater separation between comedy and tragedy within each film's narrative framework. The result is reassuring insofar as the audience can easily detach one from the other, retaining the escapist value of the comedy and relegating any thought-provoking moments to an optional complexity to embrace or forget at will.

In the second instance, the films of the neorealist revival stay away from commenting, at least explicitly, on the continuities between Fascist and post-Fascist Italy. With the exception of the epilogue of *La Lunga Notte del '43*, in which Mario Villani, son of a murdered anti-Fascist lawyer, returns to Ferrara to find his father's murderer still at the centre of a respectable, football-loving provincial society, very few of these films extend to the postwar period in anything but the most subtle of suggestions. Similarly, these films also carefully avoid pre-war Fascist society, with the exception of *La Marcia su Roma*, which nevertheless is concerned with very early Fascism and its rise to power, not with Italy as it was under Mussolini's regime. As a result of these self-imposed chronological boundaries, the films of this era privilege the analysis of Italy as it was between 8 September 1943 and April 1945: divided, partly still Fascist yet overwhelmingly anti-Fascist and, through the Resistance movement, actively involved in fighting Fascism. As we have already shown, and we shall further argue later in this book, for Italian filmmakers this was familiar territory, which even in its tragic intensity provided the only possible uplifting approach to the memory of the Fascist *ventennio*.

The uplifting and escapist tones of many post-1960 films further distance them from Zampa and Brancati's works. Although they observe

similar behaviour, although they pity the downtrodden and the undecided with similar empathy, although they criticise cowardice and opportunism with similar vehemence, the later films lead this behaviour to catharsis, whereas their predecessors had punished it with perdition. Zampa and Brancati's leading men paid the price for their actions, regardless of whether these actions were motivated by passivity or callousness; the lower-middle-class leading men of the 1960s almost invariably redeem themselves, so that even on the rare occasions when they lose their lives, like Bardone–della Rovere, they end up saving their souls. Bardone's dignified death thus appears an infinitely more tolerable fate than Piscitello's lonely existence orphaned of his eldest son.

Like Zampa and Brancati, however, the new historical films of the early 1960s generally took aim at the Fascists but also at a certain kind of anti-Fascists, late-comers too comfortable or cowardly to act. Yet, unlike in Zampa's films, these later works did not ignore the Resistance: they marginalised it narratively and politically by focusing on apolitical men equidistant from both sides, but they retained a reverential respect for the partisans. The result is subtly but significantly different from the films analysed in the previous chapter: if Zampa and Brancati argued that Italians had been neither Fascist nor anti-Fascist, but, rather, selfish, cowardly and opportunistic on both sides, the war films of the Economic Miracle seem to suggest that Italians had all been both Fascist and anti-Fascist, just like the pathetic and lovable losers of *La Marcia su Roma*, first *squadristi* then proto-partisans within the space of 90 minutes that barely elaborate on what seeks to be a paradigmatic trajectory of the average Italian.

Of course, such a sudden and forceful outpouring of films will inevitably be diverse and match each trend with an exception. This neorealist revival was heterogeneous, much like its model, although in different ways. Neorealist films had defied every attempt to label them, broken every stylistic rule associated with neorealism, and yet they had shared a fundamental ambition in regard to cinema's relationship to reality. Their 1960s revival, which shared with postwar neorealism little more than the subject matter, was in many ways its opposite: more coherent stylistically but less coherent poetically. As a primarily commercial exercise responding to the new-found popularity of the war years, these films spanned most genres, differentiating in particular between two branches that reflected rather conveniently the joint Venice triumph of Monicelli (the comic branch) and Rossellini (the serious branch). Each branch was in itself diverse: the comedies ranged from

subtly critical works like Comencini's *Tutti a Casa*, to professional packages like Corbucci's *I Due Marescialli*, to rather shallow caricatures of the genre like Steno's *I Due Colonnelli*; the dramatic branch ranged from the ecumenical nostalgias of Rossellini to the intimate tragedies of De Sica, evident as late as in *Il Giardino dei Finzi-Contini* (*The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, 1970), to the Marxist analyses of Giuliano Montaldo's *Tiro al Piccione* (*Pigeon Shoot*, 1962) and Lizzani's *L'Oro di Roma* (*The Gold of Rome*, 1961), *Il Processo di Verona* (*The Verona Trial*, 1962) *and Il Gobbo* (*The Hunchback*, 1960), Gianfranco De Bosio's *Il Terrorista* (*The Terrorist*, 1963), and Francesco Maselli's *Gli Indifferenti*, another adaptation of Moravia, which prefigured the class-based reading that would dominate the 1970s historical films.[15]

Nevertheless, significant trends can be borne out from an analysis of the privileged narrative choices of these years. It is remarkable, for instance, how many of these films embraced the day of Italy's surrender to the Allies, 8 September 1943, as their narrative fulcrum. As we have already amply witnessed, it has not been uncommon for Italian filmmakers to set their stories during the 18 months after the armistice. Indeed, this temporal limit is one of the constants that link representations of Italy's war across the postwar period, and understandably so, given that the ensuing German occupation and the anti-Fascist resistance were such traumatic and defining collective experiences. Yet in these films the armistice is not just a setting but a watershed and a fence. It is a fence because it protects audiences from dealing with memories of Fascism in power and uncomfortable images of vocal and tacit support. Thus, paradoxically, facing Italians with the nation's most tragic hour, occupation and massacre, becomes a palliative for different pains: growth pains, perhaps, because these films also treat the armistice as a fundamental watershed, the moment when an Italy collectively infantilised by Fascism and familism suddenly reaches maturity.

'8 September' becomes itself a character with an agency of its own, able to reveal people for who they are and even, sometimes, to change them. This role is a constant, although it lends itself to sometimes opposite results. *Tutti a Casa* is a virtuous example of the crucial role the day plays: it allows the analysis of the relationship between Fascism and the individual; it hones in on institutional bluster and personal delusion; it strips the moment of choice of romance and certainty. However, films like *I Due Marescialli* and *I Due Colonnelli* simplify the same choice to such an extent that the Armistice remains merely a way to collective exoneration: the subtle but crucial difference is that the latter approach suggests that Italians had already signed an armistice of

their own, suggesting long-term anti-Fascism, whereas the former just showed them as relieved when it finally happened. Comencini associates 8 September with responsibility, both that which resided with the generation that supported Fascism and that yet to be shouldered by those who chose to resist; Steno and Corbucci, like many others, chose to link the Armistice with innocence, painting a familiar picture of twice-victimised Italians, first downtrodden by their government and then brutalised by the German occupier.

Faced with having to take sides, who chooses what? If one trend of the new wave of Resistance films was the moment of choice, another common denominator was the choice itself, which is often not taken, or taken inadvertently or against one's will. The decision to resist, which undoubtedly remains the overwhelming political and cultural lynchpin of these stories, is often a last resort, delayed, as in *I Due Colonnelli*, or actively and repeatedly circumvented, as in *Tutti a Casa*. Likewise, the decision to continue to support Fascism and thus collaborate with the Germans is relegated to hapless or broken individuals. The early 1960s films portray a nation of clueless Fascists and accidental anti-Fascists. This model ends in a scenario in which the only conscious and reasoned choice is not to take sides, or rather to choose survival and individualism, painted here as a wide grey zone that encompasses passive but empathetic individuals at one end and cynical and dishonest ones at the other (Figures 5.1 and 5.2).

Compared with how it had been represented in neorealist films, the Resistance is less organised, less organic to Italy's working class, less politicised, less visible. In the films of the immediate postwar years, joining the partisans had been the inevitable choice of the righteous, catering, as we have seen, for a militant audience in dire need of inspiration and recognition. The films of the early 1960s, however, took a wholly different approach, disillusioned about ideology and party-politics and rather cynical about the bravery of Italians. With very few exceptions, the Resistance remains hallowed turf, the unquestionably moral realm of the just, but just men in these films are few and far between. While Lizzani's Florentine blacksmith hammering home the crude Marxist doctrine of *Cronache di Poveri Amanti* lives on through the Jewish shoemaker of the same director's *L'Oro di Roma*, this kind of working-class archetype becomes increasingly rare in this period.

Confined now to the works of committed Communist filmmakers, such as Lizzani, Montaldo and Pontecorvo, working-class heroes of unflinching faith are outnumbered by timorous and uncertain men whose commitment is fortuitous and sometimes resentful. For the

Figure 5.1 Clueless Fascists (*Anni Ruggenti*)

Figure 5.2 And accidental anti-Fascists. Innocenzi's catharsis in *Tutti a Casa*

magnificent dignity of the anti-Fascist judge purged by Rocchetti and Gavazza in *La Marcia su Roma* there are myriad turncoats; for the steely resolve of Rossellini's partisan chief in *Il Generale della Rovere* there are numerous characters maimed by a perennial impotence, political and

sometimes physical, as in *La Lunga Notte del '43*. The self-sacrifice of the tortured barber in Rossellini's 1959 film, or that of the young Venetian farmer in *Tutti a Casa*, are easily outmatched by dozens of cowardly acts; for every young idealist embracing a gun and heading for the hills, like *L'Oro di Roma*'s David or Carlo in *I Due Marescialli*, there are many more who scamper home. Furthermore, the decision to fight draws a treatment that is far from univocal: on the one hand, the only Jew to survive in *L'Oro di Roma* is David, who shuns sectarianism for class solidarity and piety for political action[16]; on the other hand, in Corbucci's *I Due Marescialli* Carlo represents little more than a well-meaning troublemaker, eager for suicidal action when wiser heads advice prudence. As a result, the aura that neorealism had given Resistance fighters is more subtly textured and, in some cases, even undermined.

Similar patterns of narrative consistency and semantic discontinuity also apply to the Fascists in films of this period. Many of the neorealist stereotypes of the black shirts persisted in these later treatments: the Fascists continued to be represented as immoral, opportunistic and greedy, and yet also pathetic, ridiculous and, especially, subordinate to the Germans. Indeed, the films of the early 1960s exploited for comic effect the contradictions arising from Fascists caricatured as power-hungry but completely powerless, opportunistic but unable to seize their chance, bombastic but yet evidently incompetent. The result is an array of memorable comedy black shirts that to this day inform popular perceptions of Fascism as silly and generally harmless. In this regard, the well-known comic straight man Gianni Agus delivered a paradigmatic performance in *I Due Marescialli*, in which he plays a zealous and yet utterly inconclusive Fascist *federale*, whose eagerness to please the Germans is undermined by the antics of the fake Marshall of the *Carabinieri*. Agus was so successful that he was cast in basically the same role in Luciano Salce's *Il Federale* (*The Fascist*, 1961). Armed with rigorously pomaded hair and the indispensable Mussolinian postural stiffness, Agus interprets a humourless and fanatical Fascist, not an opportunist, and yet he too sheds his black shirt and turns tail as the Allies advance. It is interesting, and telling of films of this period, that even committed Fascists, like Arcovazzi in *Il Federale*, whom we will meet close up in the next chapter, are essentially harmless and consequently escape with their lives.

There are other, much more cruel and violent, black shirts, in *Tutti a Casa*, *La Lunga Notte del '43*, *Era Notte a Roma* and *Tiro al Piccione*, for instance, who defy neorealist stereotypes, and yet they too seldom either kill or die. Indeed, the only Fascist characters killed in these films

are the brutish foreman whom Rocchetti and Gavazza accidentally kill, in self-defence, at the end of *La Marcia su Roma*, and the moderate Party Secretary of Ferrara gunned down by his own militiamen in *La Lunga Notte del '43*. A separate point should be made for Montaldo's *Tiro al Piccione*, which changed the ending of its literary source, Giose Rimanelli's eponymous novel of 1953, by having the protagonist Marco not renounce Fascism at the end: on the contrary, the experiences of defeat and betrayal strengthen his resolve, in spite of a simultaneous disillusionment. Montaldo's film paid a high price for its anti-cathartic message[17]: it was booed at the 1961 Venice Film Festival, snubbed by critics of all persuasions and unusually unpopular at the box office,[18] not to mention never being released for the home entertainment market; Montaldo himself would long suffer a kind of ostracism for his choice.[19] The case of Montaldo's *Tiro al Piccione* was not so much that of a film 'shattering a taboo'[20] as of the taboo shattering the film: on the one hand, the Italian right could not welcome the film's severe judgement of the *repubblichini* – and especially of its middle-ranking officers – hammered home by newsreel footage and voice-over comments; on the other hand, the left could not sanction the ambiguity with which Montaldo frames Marco's character, at least partially, as a victim of indoctrination and of the war that took his father away.

Notwithstanding certain exceptions, however, the filmmakers of the neorealist revival continued to hide the extent of Italy's wartime divisions even as they subtly reintroduced the concept of civil war in the national cinematic discourse. Although the Republic of Salò featured for the first time since the last episode of *Paisà* in 1946, filmmakers invited their audiences to entrench their collective recollections within a familiar and reassuring narrative. And, as in all but a few works made since 1945, in that paradigm the ideal Fascist was not a Fascist at all: a flawed individual, certainly, but always relatively absolved by the (nearly) ever-present comparison with the barbaric German. Thus, if Agus's performance had become the model for the comic Fascist cadre, most Fascists represented in the neorealist revival are even more clueless and less threatening. They have the lost eyes, empty stomachs and stubbly faces of Rocchetti and Gavazza, unable even to victimise the old judge whose stern and faultless manners humiliate them in turn; they have the drawn cheekbones and deluded faith of Mr Innocenzi Sr, who cannot let go of the regime's dreams of grandeur and would sacrifice his own son to them; they have the meaningless language and faceless threat of the communiqués by which Italian troops of *I Due Colonnelli* are sent into battle, pointlessly, without munitions or supplies; they

have, finally, the cumbersome subtext of an absence, peopled by all those who slunk away at the opportune time. What links all these cinematic Fascists is that they are pathetic: idiotic and pathetic in the films of the comic branch; threatening and pathetic in those of the serious one.

The neorealist revival thus continued to exploit dominant cinematic stereotypes of Fascism established during the immediate postwar years: namely, those of political and numeric insignificance, aesthetic and cultural otherness, and cowardly reverence for the Germans. However, these stereotypes are invested with new meaning. In 1945, amid a climate of reflection, collective mourning and expectation, mocking the Fascists had been a valuable emasculation technique aimed at giving solace to the formerly downtrodden and at undermining decades of propaganda around virility and strength.[21] In 1960, however, the same characterisation amounted to little more than hollow mockery that often ended up minimising the regime's threat, and at times even exonerating those who supported it. In the context of the Economic Miracle and the widespread awareness that many postwar hopes had been dashed, these caricatured Fascists seldom left behind anything more meaningful than a laugh and a complacent pat on the back.

This book's central thesis is that, since as early as 1945, different cultural and political analyses of Italianness have consistently and indelibly shaped how the Fascist *ventennio* has been represented in the cinema. Italian filmmakers, audiences and reviewers, discussing Fascism and anti-Fascism since 1945, have never been able to separate their representation of those historical events from their broader understanding of the Italian people. Most commonly, they played down the regime's popularity and seriousness to absolve society as a whole, and only occasionally challenged in depth this dominant vision. The films discussed in this chapter are no exception: they may, indeed, contain some of the most convincing examples of this tendency. Although they satirise Italian cowardice and at times question the nation's moral fibre, as a rule the films of this era retain the tropes of solidarity, generosity, good humour and common sense that have characterised the *italiani brava gente* myth and spelt its global success and impressive longevity.

Rossellini's *Era Notte a Roma* and its female lead, Esperia, are the epitome of this attitude's narrative power and historical precariousness. Esperia is a young Roman girl who rescues three prisoners of war: a British officer, an American pilot and a Soviet man. She is a wholesale black marketeer; she buys goods in the country, disguised as a nun to secure a better price, and sells them on to Roman street vendors. Esperia

is a businesswoman in spite of herself, having taken up the job from an enterprising mother now stuck on the other side of the front line. Consequently the young Roman girl can be callous, and the only reason she takes on the escapees in the first instance is to get a discount on oil, wine, cheese and salami. It would be interesting to know what the bakery-busting Pina would have made of her in *Roma Città Aperta*, a decade and a half earlier, when Rossellini looked at the black market as parasitism rather than as survival. But Esperia is also a working-class girl trying to get by, an old-fashioned girl waiting to get married, and – of course – an instinctive, apolitical anti-Fascist who does not hesitate to help the soldiers, at great cost to herself and in spite of her fear. Her attic, the refuge of a single night, thus becomes a meeting place of different cultures (and stereotypes) and a claustrophobic stage where the action plays out. Esperia's choice, a selfish one turned selfless, is the result not of well-defined concepts of justice and commitment but of a vague sense of duty, just the unthinking generosity that is a cardinal part of the *italiani brava gente* narrative.

There is little doubt that Catholic Rossellini and Communist scriptwriter Amidei, together again after the glory days, adopted this stance deliberately. In the version presented at Cannes, which is considerably longer than either of the cuts issued for general release, *Era Notte a Roma* literally spells it out with the English-language voice-over of Lieutenant Pemberton that illustrates the goodness of Italians: 'no one ever refused us [assistance]; many were not even on our side. I believe they helped us out of Christian charity.' 'Christian charity' begins immediately with farmers extorting money from refugees, black marketeers and three fake nuns haggling for illegal goods. The British soldier, the film's narrator, tries Latin on one of them but Esperia only speaks Italian, or, rather, Roman. A little later, Saint Peter's Dome greets the waking POWs as they look out of their attic hideout: Christianity is everywhere, as value and as stone, looking over and looking at the suffering humanity. The film's entire premise is an elegant Rossellinian reminder of the contradictions of Italians, and particularly of his beloved Romans, pious blasphemers whom the director critiques with an affectionate sigh, not a judgemental tut. *Era Notte a Roma* is nostalgic where *Il Generale della Rovere* was bitter: the latter lamented the selfishness of current and past Italians; the former longs for a suffering which made people better, for Romans too poor not to care and for Americans and Soviets allied against a common enemy.

And Esperia is not alone. As neorealist films had done, the neorealist revival films stress the bond between class and morality, in particular

linking the working class to atavistic humanitarian values that do not always extend to the elites. Prince Antoniani's family in *Era Notte a Roma* is a case in point: they do take in the British officer who has escaped the raid on Esperia's flat, but there is something disturbingly calm and collected about their mansion and the nonchalance with which they befriend both British and German officers. They possess the arrogance of wealth and class, and the knowledge that, whichever side wins, they will prosper: if Italians are taxed with being banners in the wind, then these people are banner bearers who will wave them whichever way suits them. Indeed, the Prince's palace, though not completely safe, falls under the Vatican's jurisdiction: further evidence that Christianity is the fabric of Rossellini's Rome, perhaps, but also a pointed reminder of the interested neutrality of both the Church and the aristocracy.

The working class offer a purer form of help because it is extended in spite of poverty, terror and risk. In *Tutti a Casa*, for instance, but also in almost all the films of this period, farmers and land workers never fail to help those in need, even though they might grumble about their lot. The first farmstead where Innocenzi stops patiently and generously provides civilian clothing for a constant influx of soldiers; Innocenzi's comrades, Sergeant Fornaciari and Codegato, who were farmers in civilian life, long to reach their land and share its riches with their companions. While everyone of Innocenzi's soldiers in *Tutti a Casa* longs for the home that inspires the title, the two farmers' yearning is different: the idealised farm is a haven not only because it is home but also because it is a depoliticised refuge, a place where the relationship between individual and earth is not mediated by the state. This is destined to remain a dream: the young farmer will never make a farmer's wife of the Jewish girl he has met, and the older man will barely get home before he is taken away by a nighttime Fascist raid.

The violent raid is a notable exception in the filmography of this period, especially among the comic branch of the neorealist revival, but there are spies and violent militiamen in almost all the films of this period, except for the most openly farcical works. In *Era Notte a Roma*, Rossellini does not extend to them the softening ridicule he had employed in *Roma Città Aperta*: Italian Fascists desecrate a monastery to arrest Jews; they taunt the priests and threaten to rape Esperia. Yet the only Fascist character developed at any length in the script is the spy Tarcisio, who is himself a derobed priest. Tarcisio's jealousy and resentment towards the Church accord him unnecessary psychological justifications, as drug addiction had done for Marina in *Roma Città Aperta*. Paradoxically, Tarcisio, a character whose greasy appearance and

limp and premeditated viciousness appear to break with the orthodox representation of Fascists, is in fact the exception that proves that only Italians who have cast aside Catholic values and abandoned modesty for greed can be truly evil.

If neorealism was the cradle of the *brava gente* rhetoric, in the neorealist revival even the Fascists are not actually Fascist. To stay with *Era Notte a Roma*, for instance, a crucial conversation takes place between Pemberton and the anti-Fascist doctor Costanzi who treats his wounded American comrade: when the doctor quips that there are no Fascists in Italy, the soldier replies, 'if no Italian is a Fascist, how did Fascism last so long?' 'Italians are like banners in the wind,' the doctor responds. This is not the dark side of the *Italiani brava gente* narrative that hones the edge of Zampa and Brancati's works, but rather a light grey plaid for an autumn chill. Flawed but ultimately good, more fickle than Fascist, these post-neorealist Italians are vaccinated by Christianity against totalitarianism and by poverty against *hubris*.

The films of the neorealist revival seem to hang on to the narrative of good Italians and yet also to lose faith in it, almost acknowledging their own hypocrisy. A notable exception is *La Lunga Notte del '43*, which is the most honest and complex film of the period and the one most intimately concerned with the relationship between Fascism and Italians. Vancini's film also distinguishes itself aesthetically from its contemporaries, blending the long shots and sparse editing of Visconti's neorealist films with the carefully framed shots of Michelangelo Antonioni's work, particularly in relation to contextualising the individual as isolated within his or her surroundings. Compared with most of its contemporaries, *La Lunga Notte del '43* stands out because, both stylistically and thematically, it does not feel like a faux-neorealist film, trying to recapture a moment that has passed. Rather, Vancini produced a daunting and uncompromising exploration of his own, which is grounded in the cultural environment of the Economic Miracle but already foreshadows many of the themes of the post-1968 generation.

Adapting a short story by Giorgio Bassani, the author of the much-celebrated *Il Giardino dei Finzi-Contini*, Vancini and Pier Paolo Pasolini co-wrote a script that introduces new elements to the representation of Fascism, especially in regard to the relationship between politics and the individual. The filmmakers' scrutiny of individual psychological processes and of bourgeois frustrations, of alienation, of the hypocrisy of marriage and society, all place the film alongside the works of Antonioni, Visconti and European New Wave directors like Robert Bresson and Ján Kadár. In the same vein, the film merges these concerns

with an analysis of trauma and totalitarian societies, which prefigures the 1970s efforts of directors like Bernardo Bertolucci, Liliana Cavani and Louis Malle.

La Lunga Notte del '43 is set in Ferrara in the months after Italy's Armistice and tells the story of a couple's marital crisis against the background of the establishment of the Republic of Salò and the rise to power of local Fascist Carlo Aretusi, known as *Sciagura* (Calamity). As the reinstated Fascists become increasingly violent, Anna Barilari begins a relationship with her old friend Mario Villari to escape the frustrations of her marriage to Pino, who is wheelchair-bound, depressed and a keen observer of life outside his bedroom window. War quickly encroaches on Anna and Franco's bliss: after the first raid on young men of military age, the relationship sours, politics creeps in, choices become unavoidable. Anna, who appears to have no interest in politics ('there's *Jew Süss* [Veit Harlan's 1940 anti-Semitic drama] at the Nuovo [Cinema],' she says nonchalantly), asks Franco to join the ranks of the *repubblichini* so that he may remain with her. Franco heeds neither her requests nor the openly anti-Fascist teachings of his father, until Aretusi kills the latter in cold blood. Meanwhile, Anna's husband Pino, who dislikes the Fascists, collaborates with them because he is angry about his wife's affair. Each reacts to violence in different ways: she closes up, finds it a reason to concentrate on the self; others react gregariously and politically. Subordinating politics to individualism, however, is not the way forward for Vancini, but the path to self-destruction.

In this context, Fascist violence is ample and gratuitous, against Jews and anti-Fascists but also against young men of military age and even within the Fascist ranks. In a noticeable challenge to the postwar orthodoxy, the Fascists are neither foolish nor funny, and the Resistance is barely mentioned.[22] And, as the audience eventually finds out, violence and politics underpin the film's premise: Pino Barilari's disability is not the result of a war wound, as one might assume, but the consequence of syphilis contracted in 1922 on the way back from the March on Rome, from a prostitute he was forced to have sex with at gun point by none other than Aretusi, his band's leader. Pino's disability is thus symbolic: he has been emasculated by an act of sexual aggression and he has been punished for his early Fascist sympathies.

There is no hero here, and no catharsis, either individual or collective. Unlike any of its contemporaries, *La Lunga Notte del '43* is framed by uncompromising critiques of Italian attitudes towards Fascism, accommodating in its heyday, largely subservient in the dark days and deliberately forgetful in the postwar years. At one end of the film,

the credits take us through the war from its declaration to the Armistice, juxtaposing Fascist rhetoric with Italy's worst defeats – 'Italian soldiers on the Don cover themselves with glory'; 'only one certainty: we shall return to Africa' – and emphasising the crowds cheering at all turns. At the other end, the film's postwar epilogue renders explicit Vancini's long-term disillusionment at the persistence of Fascist elements within society, at widespread amnesia and at the convenient hypocrisy of collective closure. In the film's chilling ending, which Vancini had to fight his own producers to retain,[23] Franco Villani returns home in 1955 with his Swiss family to look at the plaque commemorating his anti-Fascist father's murder, only to find Aretusi, his murderer, still living happily and holding forth in the same bar where he had strutted his Fascist stuff ten years earlier. 'He is a nobody [*un poveraccio*], I don't think he has ever harmed anyone,' are Mario's final words as the plaque remembering his father and ten other victims fades in the background. This is a slap in the face of the narrative of hope and resignation prevalent in much postwar memory of Fascism and neatly contained in the metaphor of a long night that has to pass, often borrowed from Eduardo De Filippo's 1945 play *Napoli Milionaria*.[24] But at dawn in Vancini's Italy the murderers are still among us, along with Coca-Cola, American cars and the national football team.

This kind of sharp, unsentimental appendix divided Communist and Catholic commentators, both groups being generally sceptical of the neorealist revival and particularly sensitive to any presentist political message hidden therein. Any allegorical potential drew two kinds of responses: a Catholic and reactionary one based on the almost sacred status of Resistance as an amorphous struggle of good versus evil that needed to be celebrated in a similarly abstract framework; and a left-wing one, based on Marxist readings of the Resistance as working-class war of liberation and (failed) revolution, which left little space for either complexity or revisionism. Both responses shared much of their analysis but crucially differed in their objectives: the Catholic press intended their interpretation as closure; Communist critics meant their response as a beginning, to frame present-day politics.

Catholic commentators focused particularly on 'objectivity' and impartiality, by which they signified their own interpretation of the Resistance: 'the humanist message of the Resistance stands in the faith in humanity and in its abilities,' wrote Sandro Scandolara on *Cineforum*.[25] To give the Resistance a different meaning would amount to its politically motivated exploitation or even to a 'classist and pseudo-patriotic mythologization'.[26] From the columns of the piously

glossy film journal of the *Conferenza Episcopale Italiana* (Italian Episcopal Conference, CEI), Marco Bongioanni added: 'The Resistance cannot be proposed in terms of political allegiance, or to represent the mettle of some of its leaders, but only according to its fundamental human values.'[27] Catholic critics employed euphemism and not a little hypocrisy to conclude that any film not following these parameters was an 'instrument of party propaganda aimed at current affairs, and as such would belong among the party membership',[28] not the general public, as Mario Guidotti wrote of Lino del Fra's *All'Armi Siam Fascisti*'s decision to link Mussolini's violence to Tambroni's.

On the other side of the political spectrum, the left took the filmmakers and their works in a fatal pincer movement: those who stuck to the well-trodden neorealist path, on the one hand, were reproached as commercially motivated imitations; those who did not were condemned as reactionary. Communist critics in particular extended this severe judgement while all along remaining absolutely acritical of the neorealist model, 'the most glorious pages of our cinematography'.[29] Thus, purist Resistance films like Nanny Loy's *Le Quattro Giornate di Napoli* (*The Four Days of Naples*, 1962) conformed 'supinely to a rhetorical and apologetic scheme where amorphous characters are unable to illuminate the great forces that move history because they substitute a mythical image to reality',[30] but alternative narratives, such as the one moving *Tutti a Casa*, were 'insipid, marked by an absolute *qualunquismo*, monotonous and profoundly useless'.[31]

Communist critics unfailingly resented the significant commercial success of *Tutti a Casa*, *La Ciociara* and *Il Federale*,[32] and read in it not an evolution of the audience or a new political climate, but indisputable proof that these films were shallow escapist operations. According to the same paranoid rationale, the censorship's benevolence towards these films meant that they were Trojan horses of the reaction. Luciano Quaglietti wrote on *Cinema 60*:

> To us, who know all too well the mentality of those who manage our Cinema and that the move from the Via Veneto offices to those on Via della Ferratella has been a mere matter of address, a different question stands out: why such unexplained tolerance?[33]

Quaglietti, De Michelis and many other self-proclaimed guardians of Italy's cinematic memory, unbearably pompously, though not without insight, felt that historicising the Resistance made it 'impossible to find any link whatsoever to today's reality',[34] and thus amounted to

'approaching [the Resistance] academically rather than historically in the Gramscian sense'.[35]

> In the films of the 1960s [the Resistance] has lost those themes and those meanings which made us love it, and it [...] has been emptied and defaced to be allowed back into the 'system', so that it would no longer threaten the preconstituted order. [...] Today's revolutionary films, those that affect a break with the orthodoxy, are not the pompous hagiographies that by now bother only the most obscurantist of censors.[36]

Yet, if they were right to suggest that perfunctory and celebratory approaches to the Resistance weakened its political potential, these critics ignored the fact that this potential had long gone, and that now, enshrined in memory more than action, it relied on the same mythologised apologia they claimed to despise.

Neorealism had celebrated the struggle for liberation and inherently contained an expectation, at its best a demand, for a better future. Zampa – except perhaps in *Vivere in Pace* – lamented the missed opportunities of postwar reconstruction but did not articulate an expectation or a long-term political vision, yet he still looked back, rather than forward. If one excludes Rossellini and De Sica's works, which in many ways still belong poetically to the first neorealism, the films of the neorealist revival were the first films on the war not to be informed by the immediate postwar period, the transition to democracy, the failure to purge the Fascist state and the eventual marginalisation of the PCI. They are, in a sense, the first Italian historical films on Fascism and the long Second World War. That explains their apparent dearth of new political ideas, their apparent – and at times actual – *qualunquismo*, and the fact that their comedy can appear an end unto itself and their tragedy formalist and melodramatic, neither seemingly carrying much meaning.

These films appeared to offer or illustrate a degree of closure in Italy's memory of Fascism. In fact, they were the consequence of a lack of closure that was embodied most notably in the popular revolt against the Tambroni government. Instead of closure, these films reflected – and in the best examples reflected on – the triumph of a dominant narrative based on the *italiani brava gente* myth that had achieved near consensus by taking a neorealist construction and purging it of its socio-political urgency. Never mind that this consensus was built on generalisations, stereotype, selective memories and targeted amnesia: we were all good

but misguided; the Germans were way worse; we were all partisans in the end, given the choice.

These were indeed Fascism and anti-Fascism 'for the easy years', as Communist critic De Michelis put it[37]: a disposable and uplifting memory that left audiences with the impression of having overcome hardship through sacrifice, but also allowed them to take no responsibility for the generation that had created such hardship. Nevertheless, many of the criticisms levelled at these films – in regard to their superficiality, for example, and their apolitical approach – were guided by the fact that commentators too were looking back at neorealism.[38] The left in particular could not help comparing these films with works made in another era, only recent yet an age earlier, when much of Italy was in the 1920s if not in the nineteenth century, when the USSR was a beacon and it seemed that the choice between capitalism and Communism was yet to be made.

In the early 1960s, neorealism was a political and aesthetic dogma for Communist critics, a conveniently heterogeneous artistic and humanistic paragon for Catholic critics, and an alibi for all concerned. Even though the films of the early 1960s may have looked a little like neorealism, or their directors may have been inspired by it, it was never a useful point of reference for these films. Freed from this burdensome heritage and contextualised fairly, some of the films made between 1960 and 1962 remain frustratingly shallow, but others, like *Tutti a Casa*, appear more sensitive, and still others can even be revealed as provocative and meaningful. With Luciano Salce's 1961 film *Il Federale*, the next chapter will examine the perfect example of the insightful superficiality and apolitical commitment that defined the 1960s neorealist revival.

6
Il Federale's Apolitical Commitment

> Surname: Arcovazzi. First name: Primo (First), thus named after 1 February 1923, date of the institutionalisation of the Blackshirts under the *Milizia Volontaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale* (Voluntary Militia for National Security, MVSN). Arcovazzi has taken part in the Dux Fascist camps of 1931, 1932 and 1933. In 1934 he walked from Cremona to Roma (526 kms) seeking an audience with the Duce. He was not received. In 1937 he won the Lictorial Physical Education Games. In 1939 he undertook Arcangelo Bardacci's courses of Fascist mysticism, coming first in his class; on 25 July 1943, after Mussolini's arrest, he was admitted to San Giacomo's hospital in Rome on account of his refusal to remove his black shirt.

Thus might read the imaginary staff file of Primo Arcovazzi, the protagonist, in some ways the hero, of Luciano Salce's *Il Federale*, the 1961 comedy that more than any other embodies the contradictions of representations of Fascism in the early 1960s and of Italian responses to them: shallow yet deep; commercially successful yet also overwhelmingly dismissed. Satirical at times, but tinged with sadness in the vein of Italian-style comedy, *Il Federale* follows Arcovazzi, a zealous Fascist recruit who lives to become *Federale* (provincial Fascist party secretary). A graduate of the Militia, Arcovazzi is unquestioning and brave, athletic and anti-intellectual, the ideal Fascist, when in 1944 he is discharged from his training duties to fulfil 'a special mission on behalf of the Party': he must capture and bring home a leader of the Resistance, Prof. Erminio Bonafè. The comic effect derives from the fact that Arcovazzi is also the epitome of caricatured black shirts: pompous, largely incompetent and

ultimately a bit of a softy, he 'took twenty years to learn what he knows and would take twenty more to change his mind'.

This is a straightforward storyline and a well-trodden narrative path: two dissimilar men on a road trip. Moreover, when viewers first meet Arcovazzi, unaware that his cap is on fire (from nimbly not quite clearing a fiery ring), they instantly recognise a familiar stereotype. Unlike the vast majority of Fascist characters encountered thus far, however, Arcovazzi is neither thug nor coward, neither idiot nor outcast. In spite of wrong turns and comic misadventures that are partly his own fault, Arcovazzi brings home his prisoner. For his part, Arcovazzi thus accomplishes his mission, while remaining consistent with his beliefs and showing resilience, dedication, altruism and self-sacrifice. Albeit in many ways a pathetic character, he earns the film's respect, unlike his superiors and unlike just about any other character. As we watch him narrowly escape a lynch mob at the end of the film and struggle to make sense of the collapse of his world, Arcovazzi moves viewers to respect and pity, perhaps not what they expect.

For these are, and certainly were in 1961, difficult emotions for Italians to feel in regard to a committed Fascist, unapologetic, unambiguous in his beliefs, fond of the German ally and confident of the Axis's final triumph even as the Allies knock at Rome's gaping gates. How can one feel sympathy for a man who has captured a Resistance leader and brought him to what will plausibly be torture and death in the Gestapo's infamous Roman headquarters of Via Tasso, or in some other such dungeon? Surely Arcovazzi deserves to be lynched by Rome's people in arms, surely he must be punished for his crimes and his career, ridiculed and abandoned, regardless of any other consideration. Thus, the character that Salce and scriptwriters Castellano and Pipolo constructed, and that Ugo Tognazzi brought to life, is one of the more complex in the Italian filmography on Fascism, notwithstanding his lack of pretentiousness, his farcical limitations, or the fact that the writers may well not have intended him to be as controversial and as meaningful as he turned out to be.

The simple complexity of Arcovazzi makes him a horribly sympathetic man, whom Italian critics have traditionally not only found hard to accept but also identified as insulting, revisionist, dangerous. On the shoulders of Arcovazzi's doomed certainty, *Il Federale* quickly and for a long time became the byword for the alleged superficiality of the neorealist revival. The centrist *Il Corriere della Sera* all but ignored it, dismissing it as a comedy in which 'enjoyable sketches coexist with superfluous and vulgar ones.'[1] Ellebi's review on the Communist

party daily *L'Unità* was more openly political and is telling of the left's long-term reaction to the film:

> [This is] a satire, if it is indeed possible to identify it as such under the depoliticising effect of Tognazzi's jokes, that serves no purpose whatsoever; it is a foolish oscillation between the most banal comic set pieces and the fake neorealism which would have us attribute to the characters some sort of critical function. [...] Thus the wheeler-dealers of celluloid pick up the scent of a synergy [of history and commerce] and set off to churn out films about the last days of the war of liberation.[2]

Ellebi went on to denounce the film's ending, and specifically Arcovazzi's attempted lynching, which in the critic's view was little more than a manipulative sequence designed to impress and mislead. The left-wing press were largely in agreement. Adelio Ferrero on *Cinema Nuovo* wrote:

> It is worth reiterating that an artistic analysis of this simple series of gags linked only by a facile taste [*gusto qualunquistico*] for punch-lines would be an absurdity, a contradiction in terms [...] Attention must be drawn to Salce's film for a different reason: that is for the ability with which it sells its poison to the public, administering it drop by drop with the ease of its sketches and figurines, exploiting the worst and most unpleasant instincts of the perennially young national *qualunquismo*.[3]

The left might have been particularly sensitive to the themes of the film, but this was not merely the gut reaction of a political side offended by what is indeed an unusually rough, demystifying and provocative treatment. Vito Maggiore, writing in the 1980s in a special issue of the magazine of the left-wing *Associazione Ricreativa Culturale Italiana* (Italian Recreational and Cultural Association, ARCI), aimed at secondary schools, wrote that *Il Federale* offered a 'misleading' vision: in reality, he informed his young readers, that period 'had never taken on humorous contours nor had it ever united Fascism and anti-Fascism in any respect'.[4] Maggiore's piece, and the entire issue of this admittedly rather obscure publication, are illuminating in regard to the self-righteous sense of guardianship of the Resistance still genuinely felt by left-wing Italians in the 1980s.[5]

In different ways, much more distinguished scholars also confirm the transformation of *Il Federale* into a negative model. One of Italy's leading film historians, Lino Micciché, writing first in 1975 and then as late as 1995, bitterly dismissed Salce's film as

> a chapter amongst the most degraded of the comic stem of films on Fascism [...] where an abundance of derision, evenly meted out to Fascists and anti-Fascists, ends in a victimistic fraternisation between *italiani brava gente*, whether in Fascist black shirt or bourgeois suit and tie.[6]

Micciché imputed to *Il Federale*, as indeed to all the commercially successful comedies on Fascism of the early 1960s, a tendency both deliberate and intrinsic 'to avoid engaging the spectator in a choice and to espouse a national morality centred around the lowest common denominator of a shared Italianness [*la morale patria del "semo tutti italiani"*]'.[7] In so doing, he concluded with an interesting but rather back-handed compliment, *Il Federale* deserved credit for being a useful thermometer of Italian society's 'provisional morality' and 'ideological heterogeneity'.[8] In Micciché's rather blunt but by no means blunted analysis, the commercial success of Salce's film and Tognazzi's character signalled the Italians' desire to laugh, not about Fascism, but about their own past ideological ambivalence towards it, and thus exorcise a similar, contemporary ambivalence towards the Christian Democrats and the very significant flaws of the new Italy.[9] As we have seen in Chapter 5, there are plenty of elements both in the texts and in the context of the neorealist revival to support some of Micciché's disappointment. These films' overwhelming penchant towards the catharsis of the common man, the ongoing caricaturing of the black shirts, and an overall consolatory if cynical message form an ample body of primary evidence in the historian's favour, while the films' commercial success could be seen to back up Micciché's suspicion that they enjoyed too cosy a relationship with their audiences.

Yet there are also weaknesses in this argument. First, Micciché's analysis of cinemagoers is a rather simplistic one, which moves from the twin assumptions that spectators form a monolithic whole, 'The Audience', and that the text holds only one meaning, which 'The Audience' accepts or rejects acritically. However, dismissing the first assumption on grounds of variables such as age, class, gender, personal background and regional identity[10] quickly helps us disprove the second assumption,

too. Second, there is simply no proof of what spectators thought: one can probably presume that most laughed, but we have no way of recapturing how they responded to the film's more dramatic parts, and especially to its tragic finale. Hence, while it is possible to study with some confidence the critical reception of a given film, one is seldom so fortunate as to be able to establish its links with public opinion, such as it was at the time of that film's release. Third, and most importantly, Miccichè's analysis of the text itself is short-sighted, unable to move beyond the film's premise, its main character or the sarcasm it liberally applies to all sides.

In other words, Italian critics picked the wrong film if they wanted to stigmatise the comic branch of the neorealist revival. In the previous chapter we have seen how many of these films, especially the more commercially successful ones like *Tutti a Casa*, contained a degree of nostalgia for the lost opportunities of the postwar period which coexisted uneasily with the familiar *brava gente* narrative and simultaneously gave it some much-needed depth. This chapter will argue that *Il Federale* shares that complexity, and indeed leads it to unexpected conclusions, subverting the *brava gente* myth at its core: namely, at the individual level, where it has always resided and thrived on the constructed distinction between elites and the average person.

Arguably, this was hardest to swallow in *Il Federale*: the absence of a side the audience can take instinctively, comfortably and unproblematically. The treatment of the partisans is particularly prickly in this sense, as it removes a paradigm of virtue, bravery and unshakeable belief that Italians had become well and truly accustomed to by 1961. When the audience sees the German '*Achtung Banditen*' sign on the road Arcovazzi is travelling on, its historical and cultural references are the rhetoric of the occupying forces, their brutal repression of the guerrilla, the reprisals against civilians, and, perhaps, Lizzani's eponymous 1951 film. Thus, a short time later, when the partisans act as bandits, ambushing Arcovazzi not to attack an enemy but to steal his motorbike, the film shatters these references, causing an instinctive sense of repulsion. Much later, the anti-Fascists, now victorious, have turned into a merciless mob, which attempts to lynch the hapless Arcovazzi; as he is drawn from the crowd, shaken but miraculously alive, he quips: 'These guys are worse than us.' On its own, this suggestion would have appeared tantamount to the rape of the memory of the Resistance. And yet the audience is asked to sympathise with Arcovazzi and distrust his would-be executioners, who are quite literally extras, taken out of context and out of the blue to appear not only as pitiless, but also as opportunistic turncoats.

Thus the film came to earn its label as a shallow, apolitical, silly, cynical piece of work. But how deserved were these allegations? *Il Federale* is not shallow for the very reasons that long made it unpalatable. Indeed, the only thing that remains shallow in regard to Salce's film is the depths to which commentators have been prepared to go in order to understand it. *Il Federale* begins in the final days of Rome's occupation, with Resistance leaders hiding in a convent, comfortable, well-fed and well aware of their impending victory, where their apparent idleness starkly stands out. Already bickering about postwar politics, these men can only agree on the name of Prof. Bonafè as the intellectual able to unite all anti-Fascist factions, not unlike Ferruccion Parri in 1945. We next see the good Professor cycling home only to find his apartment block in the middle of a Fascist raid. Thus the film's two protagonists come face-to-face, unaware of each other's importance: the filmmakers introduce Arcovazzi with brief and brilliant strokes, revealing him within a few shots as zealous, disciplined and efficient, yet also as completely devoid of the independent thinking or killer instinct. These are the characteristics that lead Arcovazzi meticulously to inspect the suspect's bicycle but not his identity papers, to lecture him but not to arrest him. These tropes – Bonafè's aloofness and Arcovazzi's contradictions – will ultimately define both characters.

Having inadvertently reprieved the Professor, Arcovazzi is sent by his superiors on a mission to capture him in his native village of the Abruzzi, in central Italy, where Bonafè has absconded. To his cowardly and obnoxious bosses, who closely match recurrent stereotypes of the Fascist elites, Arcovazzi is a useful and bothersome militiaman: useful for his blind faith, so blind he has no idea that Fascism is doomed; bothersome for his blind faith, so blind he fails to see the negative light his zeal casts on more pragmatic superiors. Arcovazzi will find the Professor and lead him back to Rome through many, more or less deadly, challenges, apparently impervious to the ideas of freedom, justice and equality with which Bonafè offers to enlighten him. However, as the pair get to Rome and Arcovazzi savours his promised reward, a promotion to *Federale*, they find the Allies already there; mocked and badly beaten, Arcovazzi is saved by his former prisoner, who strips him of his uniform and sends him on his way, confused and forlorn.

The road these characters travel is paved with potholes, both literally and metaphorically, and along its route the filmmakers manage to mock or condemn, more or less fiercely, partisans and Nazis, peasants and aristocrats, teachers and pupils, but also to reveal Arcovazzi as brave and compassionate. Surely, then, how can a charge of facile and superficial

mockery be levelled at a film that, in 1961, questioned the morality of individual partisans and partisan leaders, that displayed the brutality and randomness of the anti-Fascist purge in the settling of scores after the liberation, that reversed the stereotype of the American GI, creating a deformed persona that crosses crass tourist with arrogant imperialist? Such a film might legitimately attract the title of inaccurate, perhaps even of revisionist, but not that of shallow.

Nor is the film apolitical, though it is true that Salce's film targets all political parties – the Fascists but also Communists and Catholics – with similar satirical fervour. Of the Resistance leaders we have already said: they hide from war in the relative comfort of a monastery; they share the honours and power others are risking their lives to obtain for them, thus appearing cowardly and untrue to the democratic values they purport to stand for; furthermore, Salce represents them in the process of eating in two of their three sequences, in what is surely a throwback to the image of the *forchettone* (a glutton, though literally a large fork), a term indicating a corrupt politician that became popular in political propaganda during the scandals of the 1950s.[11] On the opposite political side, the despicable Fascist leaders, the cowardly character of Arcangelo Bardacci, and Arcovazzi's own ridiculous rhetoric more than take care of satirising the Fascist Party.

Notwithstanding these familiar stereotypes, it is equally true that *Il Federale* does not offer viewers the escape into a facile anti-elite discourse common to so many Italian comedies of the neorealist revival. Those who stay away from politics, or who sway this way or that at need, are not spared here. A comically unremarkable set piece, half way through the film, has the fleeing Bonafè, disguised as a German soldier, seek the help of some small farmers: these first offer to feed him, when they think he is a German; then they would rather shoot him, when they find out he is Italian; then the farmers embrace him, when the Professor's dialect convinces them that he is a local, an Abruzzese, rather than an Italian; and finally they turn him away, doubting why they should share with their equals. These people are represented as petty and selfish, not as victims of other people's politics and warfare, and they appear to be part of the problem, not of the solution. Conversely, genuine political commitment commands some endorsement in this film, particularly through the two lead characters, regardless of the righteousness of such commitment. Thus the film is not apolitical: *Il Federale* is, in many regards, anti-political, but its stance is in itself a political choice. Its critique of Italian politics is so deliberate and engaged that we could provocatively call it *engagé*, if the term did not carry different connotations in Italy's

context. Whatever one makes of *Il Federale*'s politics, it is neither simplistic and indifferent, as in the worst examples of the neorealist revival, nor fake and malicious, as in some of the twenty-first-century efforts described in Chapter 2.

The film is not equidistant between the two sides of the conflict, as many critics felt it was. *Il Federale* is indeed liberal with its satire and does not respect even the hallowed memory of the Resistance, making legitimate targets of the left's self-righteousness and hypocrisy. Bonafè himself, who is perhaps the film's only unquestionably upstanding character, is not only mocked for the lack of common sense of the stereotypical intellectual but also criticised for his aloofness from the experiences of ordinary people. His encounter with the young thief Lisa is telling of both characteristics: he calls her 'little Tyche', the Greek deity of fortune and destiny, while she sells him back his own spectacles for 150 Lire. While he seeks to find a deeper meaning in her existence, the only fortune she is interested in is the one she is trying to accumulate. But perhaps more politically significant is the early scene when Arcovazzi is driving the Professor away from his village and finds the road blocked by a crowd of pitchfork-bearing land workers: in an orthodox Marxist film this cinematic rendition of the Fourth Estate would sanction the neorealist coincidence of national liberation and proletarian revolution in the anti-Fascist Resistance, but not here, not in Salce's anti-epic. In *Il Federale* the working class goes about its business, to the dismay of Bonafè and the disappointment of Arcovazzi's own dreams of militancy, nostalgic echoes of a mythical early Fascism that he had missed out on.

Notwithstanding this savage all-round mockery, *Il Federale* does not equate the mocked. Salce does not question the righteousness of the Resistance, even though he represents partisan violence and mocks their leaders. The Resistance is endorsed as a war of liberation: fighting the Germans brings Arcovazzi and Bonafè together for the first time. More complex is the film's discourse around the morality of the Resistance, which the actions of the partisans seriously undermine. However, it is arguable that Salce's cynicism is aimed at the privileged memory of the Resistance as Italy's moral rebirth, rather than at its own moral compass, which more than withstands the film's scrutiny. For all his faults, Professor Bonafè preaches eloquently about social justice and individual freedom, about critical thinking and civic responsibility. Regardless of the problematic respect that the film might invoke for Arcovazzi's misplaced steadfastness, therefore, there is little doubt here that his belief system is wrong, while Bonafè's is just. The last words of the film are his: 'Go on, you are free, even if you do not like freedom,' he utters as he

strips Arcovazzi of his much-desired *Federale* uniform and sends him on his way.

The film's ending, which we will analyse in detail a little later, helps us peel off another of the film's labels: that of a pantomime full of cheap comic tricks and poorly developed caricatures. Some of its set pieces are indeed somewhat banal, yet elsewhere Salce and Castellano and Pipolo's comedy is sharp and fulfils its classical role in conveying insightful political and historical points. This is particularly the case with a handful of recurrent jokes, which the filmmakers use as structural pillars that offer stability to a road movie that otherwise risks becoming episodic and disjointed. Catchphrases such as '*buca!*', 'pothole!', which Arcovazzi shouts with rhythmic genius and wonderful variation ('pothole with water') in the ardent tone that marks all his official communications, or the Fascist submariners' song,[12] are moments of simply elegant hilarity that also convey Fascist idiosyncrasies and give depth to the characters and their relationship. Bardacci's mystical poem *Chi?* (Who?) is indicative of this satire:

> Just the man for shot and shell/ The leader to follow even to hell!/ Bravo Benito!/ Who leads the black shirts fair and square/ To triumph every time and every where!/ Daring Duce!/ Who turns his back on the Frogs and Brits/ And lines us up with the Huns and Nips!/ My Mussolini![13]

But the main charge against Salce and the scriptwriters was not to have been unfunny, but to have used comedy to anaesthetise the spectator, muddy the waters of the past and, by their turbid embrace, make all sides look the same. The film's detractors ignore, however, that the film is comic, yes, but not only, and not all the time. A sense of personal and collective anxiety pervades it, and laughter and desperation walk hand in hand. The last leg of Arcovazzi's and Bonafè's Rome-bound journey is an excellent example of this ambivalence. They sit on a rickety coach packed with people: children, a fat red-cheeked farmer, a parson on his way to have his statue (of the Blessed Colasanti) consecrated, peasant women with ample hips and hidden heads, a driver full of the barked witticisms of the Romans. This is a bus, in short, populated with stereotypes that we have become accustomed to in Italian war cinema: either comic or dramatic, and often both, but generally positive stereotypes of good Italians.

The coach travels on, but its engine is exhausted and its brakes worn out: the passengers descend to push when the bus labours uphill, then hurry back on before alighting again almost immediately, this time to

stop it careering downhill. At each visit they lose a passenger, an elderly man who cannot quite catch up, while the helpless driver does not dare to stop, lest the engine in its agony expire. When they finally come to a halt, the farmer offers cheese to Bonafè, but only for a fee, of course. Even as a rare moment of solidarity is mercilessly dashed, Allied planes swoop down on the resting passengers: they are spared, but the bullets pierce the holy icon, which begins to weep tears . . . of extra virgin olive oil. The miracle is exposed as a sham and the priest as just another black marketeer. Just then the airplanes return and Arcovazzi dives just in time to save children from their fire.

On Salce's coach everyone is a fraud, even the sacred effigy. This is a collective metaphor as bitter as it is unsubtle. It employs stereotypical characters usually charged with confirming the inherent goodness of salt-of-the-earth Italians and inverts them to represent selfishness and duplicity, while the Fascist perpetrates the only genuinely selfless act. Salce's Italy is not only as knackered as his coach, disabled and forsaken, but also, like the passengers, bereft of compassion and morality. Stripped of pity and of *pietas*, even of warmth, *Il Federale*'s Italy evades the founding emotions of the *italiani brava gente* narrative and the staple diet of postwar Italy's films on Fascism, whether in the political narratives of postwar neorealism or in the apolitical humanism of an age that I have here called an age of 'reconstruction' – in respect to the synergy of Italy's economic reconstruction and the cultural reconstruction of Italy's memories of Fascism – but that others might have called an age of 'restoration', as many Communist critics did even before Tambroni's government.[14]

Il Federale is funny but not comic, or, rather, its comedy is tragic and often cynical. Nevertheless, given all that has been suggested here about the politics of the film's narrative and aesthetics, it is arguable that this is not the lazy cynicism of the uncommitted who find refuge in mocking the engaged, solace in highlighting their failure, confirmation that taking sides was pointless; instead, Salce's sarcasm is a committed and angry one, and it is the film's anger, more than any other emotion, which makes the film uncomfortable and even ugly to watch. More than outrage at the negative representation of the Resistance, suspicion at the idea of a good Fascist or dismay at the collapse of heart-warming stereotypes, it is *Il Federale*'s underlying aggressiveness that sanctions its denial of a way out, its refusal to offer closure and, in the final analysis, both the film's notoriety and its uniqueness.

The emotion that moves the film, that inspired Castellano and Pipolo's scenario, was pity for a slightly dim man who bought into Fascism wholesale while vast swathes of society retained a psychological

way out, even when they did not seek a political one. Arcovazzi does not have a family, he is not a devout Catholic, he does not identify with his birthplace in any meaningful way: in short, he does not belong – morally, psychologically or physically – to anything other than the Militia. As Fascism collapsed, when others were able to replace Fascist identity with a ready-made alternative, such as familism, religion or regional identity, he had only a black uniform that did not even belong to him. Arcovazzi is a deeply pathetic character and his proximity to Bonafè, a rounded and aware human being, curious and understanding, only intensifies the audience's emotional engagement with him.

Arcovazzi lacks the characteristics that form the ambiguous backdrop to the *brava gente* narrative: cunning, cynicism, suspicion towards the law, an innate ability to make do. In the orthodox narrative of Italy's identity these tropes shed their negative characteristics for two reasons: first, they are overwhelmed by their cohabitation with the virtues of solidarity, hospitality and kindness; and, second, Italian scepticism carries positive consequences of its own, not least in acting as an antibody against totalitarianism. Salce dissects the stereotypes of Italian national identity; he neither reverses them nor necessarily challenges them, but simply divides them in two: Arcovazzi and Bonafè hold kindness and human warmth without cunning or common sense, while the rest of Italy abounds in the latter without holding anything of the former.

The result of this unusual analysis is that pity may have inspired the scenario but anger inspires the film. It is a pervasive bitterness that spans past and present: Salce is angry at Italy as it had been, Fascist and cowardly, and at Italy as he saw it at the time of filming, selfish and self-satisfied. As we have seen, nobody is spared: anti-Fascists and Fascists; farmers and aristocrats; workers and intellectuals; women and men; individuals and institutions. Arcangelo Bardacci, a Fascist of the first hour, 'poet, warrior, a veteran of the Arditi, the expedition to Fiume and the 1919 Manifesto of Sansepolcro', is perhaps the best example of the filmmakers' suspicion of appearances and of the merciless scalpel with which they dismantle them. Arcovazzi seeks out Bardacci, his former teacher, only to find him hiding in his attic, having faked a daring death in the skies of Albania. Shivering with fear in his attic, Bardacci ponders how to recapture his political virginity, adapting his Fascist poem *Chi?* for the new era: 'The Germans are beat/ The warfare is past./ Praise be to God, freedom at last!'[15]

Political caricatures aside, it is the pitiless critique of average Italy that sets the film apart. The first civilians we encounter are Bonafè's aunt and his childhood sweetheart, back in his native village, who not only

cannot tell the First World War apart from the Second, but also fail to understand that the Fascists want to arrest Bonafè, not honour him. They congratulate themselves on leading Arcovazzi to the Professor's hideaway. Immediately afterwards, the pitchfork-carrying crowd that we have already mentioned not only do not rescue Bonafè, but look at him in Arcovazzi's sidecar and conclude: 'after all the things he said even he has gone over to the Fascists!' Salce's is not a class-based mockery, either. An interesting cameo in this respect is that of the Marquise Eleonora Castaldi di Altipiano: a noble woman reduced to working for her leaseholders, who now treat her and her son gruffly, without any class deference. As well as confirming the film's critique of the rural working class, this scene contains a distinct element of condemnation for this soft-spoken aristocrat, who has nothing left save memories of happier days, symposia on Proust and parlour anti-Fascism. She is kind, elegant and obviously lost, but arguably the compassion with which the film looks upon her is far outweighed by a sense of annoyance at her apathy, both past and present. Just after the encounter with the Marquise, Arcovazzi and Bonafè meet another lost man, but of a completely different class. This nameless man wanders through a quarry unable and unwilling to say either where he has come from or where he is going. Goggle-eyed and with a thick accent, this wandering fool is a fleeting extra, yet the brevity of the encounter suggests that his significance is symbolic, not literal. In the context of the film, sandwiched between Marquise Eleonora and Bardacci's hideaway, this aimless and wretched man, half war veteran half peasant, so terrified of knowledge that he no longer knows who he is, is another indictment of a rotten system and a rotten people.

Italians in *Il Federale* are mean, stupid or lost and, in the generalised chaos, two teenagers with a rusty rifle are the last semblance of an institution: they man the abandoned Fascist Party headquarters of a nondescript town with every bit the fervour and utter ineffectiveness of a young Arcovazzi. Only one character thrives in *Il Federale*, and that is Lisa, the young thief. Arcovazzi and Bonafè meet her three times. On the first two occasions she steals Bonafè's glasses and Arcovazzi's clothes, but she seems unequivocally a victim: a teenager hardened by life whose individualistic philosophy inserts itself between the two men's opposing ideologies as an errant ethics of theft that silences both populism and democracy. However, on their third encounter, at Rome's gates, Lisa is no longer a victim or a thief: no longer dressed in rags, she is a street pedlar with her own cart pulled by an even younger boy she treats little better than a slave. She gifts Arcovazzi the uniform of Fascist *Federale* he

had so longed for, but, paradoxically, in her only act of generosity she is handed an unambiguous moral judgement that sanctions the perpetuity of the moral damage she has taken and, simultaneously, withdraws any justification or sympathy from her character.

Lisa's character, more than any other, proves that the filmmakers' concern spans the past and the present. As she loses her soul in the act of gaining entrepreneurial skills, she prompts the viewer to note that the tropes of almost all the negative characters in this film eventually lead to greed and materialism and the pursuit of personal wealth. To all intents and purposes only Arcovazzi and Bonafè are spared these charges. Where will Lisa be by 1961, in the middle of Italy's Economic Miracle? Will she own a retail chain, and how will she treat her staff? Will she use the memory of her hardships to spare others from them or to replicate her own exploitation? The last encounter with Lisa introduces the ending of the film: an ending that renders explicit the film's attempt to break down the barrier between past and present and, at the same time, makes all questions about Lisa's future seem merely rhetorical; an ending so bleak that it undoes *Il Federale*'s entire premise, turns its style on its head and cements the film's significance and its apparent flaws.

The ending of *Il Federale* comprises six astonishing minutes that promise the free-for-all chase that often marks a farce's ending but in fact deliver a brutal climax. The first sign that Arcovazzi will not accomplish his mission arrives as they cross the Tiber; in Rome at last, Bonafè notices road signs in English and an American jeep driving by. Arcovazzi marches his prisoner on, determined to ignore the obvious. Soon, however, the misunderstanding is cleared up: Rome is in American hands, but the comedy of errors one expects does not materialise, as the tone turns instead more and more sombre. Salce takes the American soldier that populates Italian memories of the liberation and turns him on his head: gum-chewing becomes a hideous deformity; abundance becomes vulgarity; joviality and naivety become a mocking and ignorant, imperialist gaze.

Bonafè and Arcovazzi, both shell-shocked, enter a courtyard full of American soldiers, jeeps and crates of cigarettes. One pulls out a camera with the slick and threatening movement of a Western gunslinger while the others laugh uncontrollably at the Fascist's uniform and scoff down tins of drink, dribbling hideously in another reference to Westerns. Shot unsubtly from a low angle that accentuates their unarmed menace, the American liberators are now crass tourists, utterly devoid of decorum and respect for the objects of their photographs. Although they are harmless and let the two Italians go, their *hubris* is such that even

Figure 6.1 A Roman holiday?

Figure 6.2 The *hubris* of Salce's American military tourism

Bonafè, who should by now see his hopes of rescue coming through, slinks away with Arcovazzi, while the viewer is genuinely shocked and confused by the reversal of such an integral part of Italy's cinematic memory of the Second World War (Figures 6.1 and 6.2).

Relentless, the director pounds on. Barely has the viewer made sense of this sudden change of tone when partisans and Romans spot Arcovazzi, surround him, and lynch him. If the reversal of the happy GI stereotype had confused spectators, the dismantling of the orthodox character of the just and brave partisan simply astonishes them. This is a scene of such unadulterated violence, especially in the context of this film's comic language, that it is hard to do it justice with words. Similarly speechless, the film's non-diegetic soundtrack stops to highlight the cries of 'get him' coming from the anti-Fascists' swelling numbers.

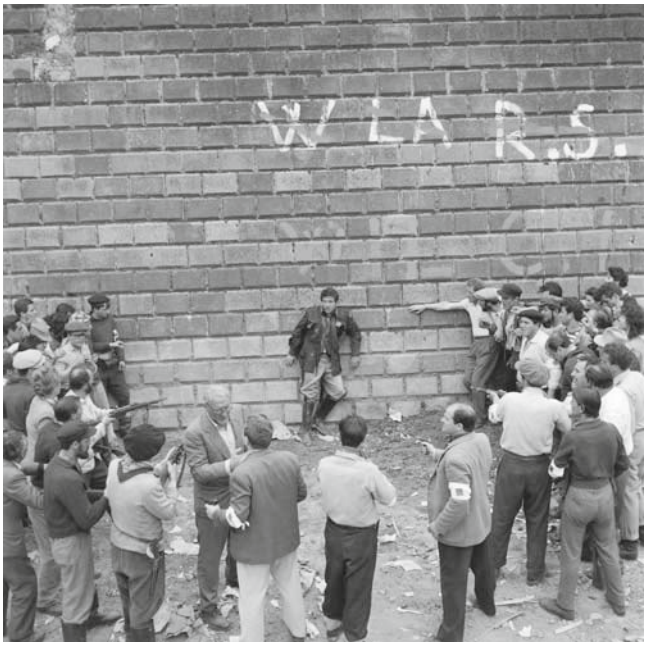

Figure 6.3 Partisan justice under the shadow of the civil war
Source: Courtesy of Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.

As they catch up with him, they corner Arcovazzi against a wall graffitied with the contrasting slogans: 'W l'RSI' and 'W il CLN', celebrating Mussolini's Social Republic (RSI) and the Committee for National Liberation (CLN). The camera dwells on Arcovazzi's hat – a symbol of his beliefs and aspirations – lying in a puddle while the crowd begins to land punches and kicks (Figure 6.3).

The shoulder-held camera alternates shots of the mob punching a terrorised Arcovazzi and subjective shots from the perspective of Arcovazzi, surrounded by his attackers. Both perspectives are equally terrifying and brutal, upsetting and physically sickening because of the moving camera. It is telling of Salce's intentions that he forces the audience to experience both views, to join the mob in lynching a Fascist man one moment, and to stare at the executioners' faces, deformed by hatred and proximity, the next. If Salce had wished merely to elicit sympathy for Arcovazzi, maliciously to use detail and personalisation in order to upset the balance of the memory of those years, to rehabilitate Fascism as a whole or draw a facile comparison, he would not have offered

Figure 6.4 The spectator stares death in the face

both perspectives. Rather, he could have filmed the whole scene from Arcovazzi's point of view, or indeed from Bonafè's, looking on helplessly, in a style charged with different emotions: sadness and pity instead of anger, terror and disorientation (Figures 6.4 and 6.5).

Instead, the audience is allowed to engage equally with the people's rage and with the terror of a man whose mistakes have caught up with him all at once. Thus, the fury that deforms the faces of the Roman working class as they strike Arcovazzi is a wonderful oxymoron: it makes them a violent mob and draws the audience to condemn their summary justice, but it also contextualises their action, literally forcing us to engage with it. If these disturbing and seemingly endless 30 seconds lead spectators to a moral indictment and a dose of historical revisionism, then, it is not in relation to the Resistance or its morality, as commentators have often surmised, but rather in relation to Italy as a whole. The question it asks is not whether or not Arcovazzi deserved punishment for a lifetime of Fascism, but rather this: how many of the faces that are now beating Arcovazzi were up in the hills with the partisans, how many were passive victims of Fascism, and how many, having hailed Mussolini for decades, now found a new political virginity through the sacrifice of someone else's body? It is this ready-made catharsis that the filmmakers condemn, not the Resistance, questioning, rather, the facile certainties and stereotypes constructed in order effortlessly to move on.

And, indeed, if Bonafè in this film represents from the outset the values of the Resistance, in their abstract and slightly utopian but nevertheless pure state, then it can be argued that it is the Resistance that saves Arcovazzi from his doom. The Fascist escapes thanks to his old

Figure 6.5 The spectator queues to land a punch
Source: Courtesy of Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.

prisoner, who strips him of his uniform, saving his life but also removing wholesale his identity, his beliefs, his broken moral compass. 'I am dressing you as a bourgeois,' Bonafè says, 'you will get used to it. There, you are free, even if you do not like freedom.' As a traumatised Arcovazzi stumbles away, American soldiers from a jeep throw him three packets of cigarettes, but the gesture is framed in such a way and at such speed that 'throwing at him' would be a more accurate description. Once again, the Americans are shot from below and their actions are crass; their gesture is generous, and yet it is imperialistic because they do not ask Arcovazzi and Bonafè if they would like cigarettes. Furthermore, their act is wasteful, and Tognazzi beautifully conveys Arcovazzi's moment of bewilderment at such abundance, before chucking the tobacco away in disgust. Bonafè, his prisoner turned companion, captures this moment, offering Arcovazzi the last page of his treasured miniature edition of Leopardi's sonnets to use as a roll-up.

Both Arcovazzi and Bonafè, defeated and victor, manage to survive by hanging on desperately to their dignity and their coherence as

shipwrecked men might hang on to a raft. Dignity is both the winner and the loser of this film: it is the loser because it is forgotten, downtrodden, subservient and also incapable of making a real difference in society; but it is also the winner, because it survives, retaining the only glimmer of a positive moral judgement. But to grasp at it as they drown both Fascist and anti-Fascist have to abandon what they cherish: Arcovazzi must give up his *Federale* uniform; Bonafè his vintage edition of Leopardi's *L'Infinito*, which he gives to his enemy so that he can smoke in his own fashion. A significant gesture: Bonafè understands what is important to Arcovazzi, but the reverse is also true, because the Fascist does not smoke Leopardi's words. Rather, he pockets them and walks off towards Rome: does 'shipwreck in this sea seem sweet' to Arcovazzi?

The underlying message of *Il Federale* in the film's final moments abandons the history of wartime Italy and becomes a critique of consumerism and, more broadly, of the foundations of postwar Italy. If it is easier to guess where a social-democratic intellectual such as Prof. Bonafè will be in 1961, it is harder to imagine Arcovazzi's fate. Were his Fascist superiors right when they quipped that 'it would take him twenty years to change his mind'? Will he seek solace among the nostalgics of the MSI or will the trauma of defeat lead him to consider more carefully the crumpled piece of paper in his pocket, and perhaps change his mind, or pretend that he never held those ideas, even to the point of genuinely forgetting that he had been, however briefly and spuriously, a Fascist *Federale*? The counter-history of Arcovazzi Primo is irrelevant, but his walk towards the city, so reminiscent of and yet so completely different from that of Romoletto's boys in *Roma Città Aperta*, as desolate as that was hopeful, truly sanctions the end of an era: two walks towards two different cities, one wounded and ancient, the other modern and squalid, Rossellini's and Salce's Romes act as book-ends to early postwar attitudes towards Italians at war.

Part IV
Revolution

7
The Sins of the Fathers

Salce's pains went ignored in the summer of 1961, and Arcovazzi's existential angst was invariably drowned out by his comic pathos. Thus *Il Federale* earned an undeserved legacy, to which it owes both its popularity and its infamy, as the preeminent exponent of a kind of comic, helpless and harmless Fascist which has in fact inhabited the vast majority of Italy's representations of the regime since 1945. This stereotype would never go away completely because it is built into narratives of national identity and national history which are still largely dominant today, albeit in significantly different guises. The Fascist buffoon certainly survived well into the 1970s, in Dino Risi's *I Telefoni Bianchi* (*The Career of a Chambermaid*, 1976) and Alberto Sordi's *Polvere di Stelle* (*Stardust*, 1973), for instance, and even in the late 1990s Roberto Benigni's *La Vita è Bella* (*Life Is Beautiful*, 1997) provided superb incarnations of that type. However, the heyday of the Fascist buffoon was the early 1960s, after which the character declined together with the *commedia all'italiana*.

By 1963, the reconstruction was over and the unique mixture of hardship and opportunity that had infused it with its specific flavours had dissipated. Consumerism and increasing wealth brought about by the Economic Miracle changed the dynamics of Italian society forever, creating a much larger middle class and a vast industrial working class. Increased wealth had a privatising effect on domesticity and leisure, too, as ownership of appliances, such as washing machines and televisions, gradually undermined what had often been social activities even as urbanisation brought about a shift from extended to nuclear families.[1] For the first time in Italy's history a widespread process of internal migration, mostly from South to North and from province to centre, hastened the emergence of a modern and national popular culture.[2]

Underpinning all this was a generational change that would, by May 1968, emerge as a defining moment in postwar European politics.[3] Men and women born after the war reached maturity in the mid-1960s: they were largely a well-educated and mobile cohort with international cultural references and no memory whatsoever of events, such as World War Two and the Resistance, that had nevertheless been thrust upon them as a crucial part of their identities. Some of these women and men would look around from the bourgeois vantage point of the opportunities that postwar Italy had afforded them and realise that they did not, and would not, share the moral burden for their parents' mistakes. In doing so, they would certainly commit new mistakes of their own: they would often be overzealous, arrogant, confused and patronising; they would dramatically misread their own political models, seeing utopia where there was only dictatorship; they would harbour the same patriarchal and violent tensions as their enemies; and they would forget that their own parents might well have been guiltless.[4] But they would also act as a moral compass, nourishing the desire for social justice and peace upon which postwar Europe claimed to be built.[5]

Notwithstanding the diverse aims and politics which characterised its student, worker and feminist movements, in every European country where the youth rebellions of 1968 took shape these young students and workers would propose a critique that simultaneously targeted contemporary politics and the history of the long Second World War. They charged the memory barricades erected between past and present in order to question their parents' actions and, crucially, their inaction. They lifted the veil on the hypocrisies and missed opportunities of postwar Western Europe and rejected the meanings preapportioned to their own existence and to the historical and political roots of their nations. In France, that meant attacking and bringing down Charles de Gaulle, General and President of the Republic, a living link between present and past who had made his World War Two persona the basis of his postwar power.[6] As in France, West Germany's youth movement targeted their parents and the nation's symbolic father, Konrad Adenauer, who had managed until 1963 – when he finally retired at the venerable age of 87 – the fragile and extremely successful balancing act of the Christian Democratic governments.[7] Inextricably linked to the Cold War balance of power and the new European integration movement, West German identity was built on economic performance, opposition to the East and the repression of the traumas of the Nazi era. The generational change helped scuttle some of these premises, usher in West Germany's first Social Democratic Chancellor, Willy Brandt – who had

abandoned Marxism – and with him an era of new interaction with the East.[8] Meanwhile, in Eastern Europe, and nowhere more significantly than in Czechoslovakia, young women and men of the same age faced their own leaders and the Red Army to demand the democracy and the kind of consumerist nation that their Western counterparts were rejecting as limited, bankrupt and bourgeois.[9]

But, wherever it was not met with tanks, the generational upheaval of the late 1960s brought about a change in politics and political personnel. Except in Italy. The anomalies of Italy's democracy in the Republican era ensured that there would be no change in government; the Christian Democrats remained majoritarian coalition partners from 1948 to 1994. As well as the popularity of centrist and Christian conservatives, which was certainly not limited to Italy, a number of unique Italian characteristics prevented the Italian left from becoming a viable government alternative as it did in West Germany, the other defeated World War Two belligerent turned Cold War frontline. First, the presence of the Vatican ensured that Catholicism and the clergy continued to be agents of political power even as secularism rose,[10] in Italy as anywhere else in the West. Second, the predominance of clientelism and the vote-shifting power of criminal organisations in large swathes of the country continued to influence voting patterns and general elections.[11] Third, the strength of the Communist opposition scared many, on both the domestic and international fronts, while the PCI's failure to strike a strategic alliance with the PSI (Socialist Party) isolated it on the left. Fourth, from 1969, formidable anti-democratic threats from deviant sections of the secret services, from neofascists and, later, from Marxist terrorist groups literally terrorised society into rallying around the status quo. Italy was thus cornered into the 1970s oxymoron of sacrificing democratic choice for the survival of democracy.

After the dramatic failure of their right-wing turn, culminating in the debacle of the 1960 Tambroni government, the Christian Democrats in 1963 brokered an alliance with the PSI which would last three decades.[12] The *centrosinistra* (centre–left), or *pentapartito* (five-party alliance), as it was later dubbed to reflect the involvement of the smaller Liberal (PLI), Social Democratic (PSDI) and Republican (PRI) parties, resolved the DC's long-term alliance problems and provided some stability to Italy's political system. It also ensured the electoral isolation of the PCI and, within the safety of perpetual government, provided ruling parties with a platform to extend their practice of parcelling out power without any democratic control. The resulting frustration with both the system and the lack of tools to change it would result from 1968 in a

decade-long search for such instruments: now through militancy in the parliamentary or extra-parliamentary opposition; now through Enrico Berlinguer's and Aldo Moro's ideas about a possible synthesis between PCI and DC, known as *compromesso storico* (historic compromise)[13]; now through popular referenda, as in the case of the *Partito Radicale* (Radical Party, PR)[14]; now through violent revolutionary action, most notably in the case of the *Brigate Rosse* (Red Brigades, BR).[15] Thus the energy of 1968, the generational faultline which throughout the West delivered social, cultural and political change, in Italy left important emotional, cultural and moral legacies but otherwise remained politically a largely frustrated and, in hindsight, often a destructive force.

Sandwiched between the *centrosinistra* and the *compromesso storico*, and strangled by the reactionary Strategy of Tension on one side[16] and revolutionary terrorism on the other, the 1968 movements, in universities, factories and homes, found themselves orphaned of democratic options and besieged by fear and doubt. Thus, the fact that, in these circumstances, that generation achieved the cultural, social and industrial victories that it did, such as union representation and the 150 hours of paid education for workers[17] and the legalisation of divorce (1974) and abortion (1981), can be considered a triumph that offsets some of the movements' many failures. Besides these important practical reforms, the *sessantottini* had the long-lasting merit of challenging the patriarchal hypocrisy of Italy's Catholic morality and the prudish voyeurism of much 1960s popular culture.

Fear, doubt, the obstacles to democratic change and the new generation's desire to achieve not reforms of the system but fundamental changes to it led in most of Europe to a period of introspection about the past, and the long Second World War in particular came under intense scrutiny. In the context of the late 1960s and 1970s, reconsidering Europe's tragic recent history was a way of analysing and critiquing concepts of modernity and capitalism, as well as consequent narratives of national identity, and thus question the political and social house built on these foundations. Unsurprisingly, cinema, as a simultaneously popular and political art, was at the forefront of this process.[18]

In France, Marcel Ophuls's documentary on Clermont-Ferrand under Vichy, *Le Chagrin et la Pitié* (*The Sorrow and the Pity*, 1971) interpreted an overwhelming desire to cast aside the hypocrisy of the Gaullist narrative of *resistancialisme* but, in so doing, also offended the Communists' own mythical memories, earning Ophuls the accusation of constructing a 'psychologically pernicious' generalisation about 'a cowardly, selfish, evil France', as no less than Simone Veil put it.[19] *Le Chagrin et la Pitié*'s

state television boycott and its corresponding triumph in Parisian cinemas ushered in an era of fierce introspection, which not only ridiculed the idea of France as an innocent victim, but also constructed an implicit parallel – for example, through Louis Malle's *Lacombe, Lucien* (1974) – between France as victim in World War Two and France as perpetrator in the Algerian war (1958–64), two events crucially linked through the person of Charles de Gaulle.[20]

In West Germany, the New German Cinema performed a similar task through an often merciless analysis of the idea of Germany as Hitler's first victim, a lynchpin of West German identity.[21] The theme of a collective German guilt passed down, as in an Aeschylean tragedy, from father to son was intrinsic in almost any topic treated by West German *auteurs*, who bombarded the nation with daunting symbols and self-accusatory gazes, as in Werner Herzog's *Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes* (*Aguirre: the Wrath of God*, 1972), Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Die Ehe der Maria Braun* (*The Marriage of Maria Braun*, 1978), Volker Schlöndorff's *Die Blechtrommel* (*The Tin Drum*, 1979) and Edgar Reitz's TV series *Heimat – Eine deutsche Chronik* (*Heimat: A German Chronicle*, 1984), to name but a few.[22]

Even in the Soviet satellites of Eastern Europe, looking at the past in new ways became popular, not least as one of few acceptable subjects.[23] Thus, whether shrouded in Communist narratives of Resistance, as in Andrzej Wajda's *Krajobraz Po Bitwie* (*Landscape after the Battle*, 1970) – as in his earlier war tetralogy (*Pokolenie*, *A Generation*, 1955; *Kanal*, 1957; *Popiół i Diament*, *Ashes and Diamonds*, 1958; *Samson*, 1961)[24] – or disguised in a critique of Fascism as greed, as in Ján Kadár and Elmar Klos's *Obchod na Korze* (*The Shop on Main Street*, 1964),[25] or woven into personal memories, as in István Szabó's *Apa* (*Father*, 1966) and *Szerelmesfilm* (*Lovefilm*, 1970),[26] or lightly touched in the fairytale narrative of Frank Beyer and Jurek Becker's *Jakob, der Lügner* (*Jacob the Liar*, 1975),[27] we can find simultaneously historiographical and allegorical critiques of totalitarianism, injustice and conformism even in Poland, Czechoslovakia or Hungary.

Like the rest of Europe, Italy faced shared challenges in a unique context. Almost everywhere the past became a battlefield, and almost everywhere that front was a place to fight past and present battles: France had Vichy and Algeria; West Germany had the Reich and its failed postwar purge, as well as the separation into two countries; Poland had the twin invasions of 1939, a landscape scarred by genocide, its highly traditional peasantry and continuing close marriage between Catholicism and nationalism; Hungary had the Arrow Cross dictatorship and the repression of 1956. Italy had its own traumas and an

uplifting narrative of survival so widespread that it had almost become repressive in its own right. Because of these characteristics, and the immobile political system already outlined, Italy's experiences in the late 1960s and 1970s place it in between the representative democracies of the West and the Communist dictatorships of the East. In Italy, reconsidering the past took on two roles: on the one hand, as it did in the East, it obviated the impossibility of achieving real political change; on the other hand, as it did in the West, it became an intensely political act in its own right, because it was evident that Italian democracy was under threat from forces that past errors, and a skilful determination to ignore them, had failed to remove from Italian society.

It should not be surprising, then, to see memory and allegory emerge as central elements of Italian war films of this period, as David Forgacs has shown.[28] The historical films made in the 1970s about Fascism and anti-Fascism were diverse and high-profile, though not as numerous as they had been in the early 1960s. From Fellini's *Roma* (1972) and *Amarcord* (1973) to Bertolucci's Fascist trilogy of *Il Conformista* (*The Conformist*, 1970), *La Strategia del Ragno* (*The Spider's Stratagem*, 1970) and *Novecento* (1900, 1976), the processes of remembering and forgetting became both a means and an object of investigation. These films developed further a fascination with memory that had already been evident in the 1960s, in films like Luchino Visconti's *Vaghe Stelle dell'Orsa* (*Sandra*, 1965). Reflective historical novels such as Giorgio Bassani's *Il Giardino dei Finzi-Contini* (*The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, 1962) and memoirs such as Carlo Levi's *Cristo si è Fermato a Eboli* (*Christ Stopped at Eboli*, 1945) were adapted for the big screen, by Vittorio De Sica and Francesco Rosi respectively; flashbacks became commonplace techniques to connect explicitly the Fascist and the postwar eras and to explore the Freudian concept of trauma, as in Liliana Cavani's *The Night Porter* (1974) and, most notably, in Bertolucci's two 1970 works.

This chapter does not aspire to analyse comprehensively all these works, their often colourful histories, their reception or their filmmakers. Rather, as the book has done so far, it will try to tease out the trends in the cinematic representation of Fascism in this period and analyse how they enlighten the interaction between history, memory and identity at this crucial juncture in postwar Italy. In this case, the chapter will focus specifically on the theme of memory as a central cinematic concern of the period, and on the films' privileged parallel interpretative keys of Marxism and Freudian psychoanalysis, in order to offer a thematic analysis of how these left-wing films reinterpreted Fascist Italy, in

ways both inspired and deeply flawed, both revolutionary – as befitted the period – and unexpectedly traditional.

Collectively, these artists remembered a Fascist Italy full of pettiness and corruption, of an empty rhetoric of greatness ruthlessly contrasted with deprivation, destruction and death. But, if Fascist pomp and incompetence had been favourite targets in previous decades, too, the meaning assigned to them changed now. The black shirts, for example, who had inspired scorn in *Roma Città Aperta*, mockery in *La Marcia su Roma* and pity in *Il Federale*, became impeccable half-liberal bureaucrats, superbly embodied by Commissario Rizzuto in Marco Leto's *La Villeggiatura* (*Black Holiday*, 1973),[29] or sadistic torturers, agents of death in Bertolucci's films, not to mention in Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Salò o le 120 Giornate di Sodoma* (*Salò or the 120 Days of Sodom*, 1975). The satirical gaze did not completely disappear in these years, and the Fascists continued to be ridiculed in Italian films, but, even where they are buffoonish, such as in Fellini's *Amarcord*, that sarcasm seldom carries the implication of harmlessness present in many films examined thus far: Fellini's Fascists, for example, may well be freaks, but the castor oil they force down Titta's father's throat is still disgusting and humiliating, not the invigorating beverage it became in Risi's clever and false reversal in the purging scene of *La Marcia su Roma* discussed in Chapter 5. Similarly, in the 1970s, the rhetoric and pomp of the Fascists appeared more often to carry serious consequences, such as violence and war. Hollow though hindsight may reveal it to be, Fascist pomp began to take on a crucial role in these films as symptom of a totalitarian aspiration and reminder of the regime's popularity.

A telling change, in this respect, is the absence of the Germans, who appear less and less, matching at least narratively a wider European trend towards introspection and collective self-examination. With the exception of Carlo Lizzani's rigorous reconstruction of Mussolini's last days, *Mussolini: Ultimo Atto* (*The Last Four Days*, 1974), Germans and Nazis are either marginal or just not there. Indeed, even in Lizzani's film, the Nazi alibi is removed as Italian Fascists are indicted with the full range of crimes against humanity and punished accordingly. The marginalisation of the Germans is the result of two momentous breaks with previous representations: one of chronological setting and another of focus and responsibility. We have already seen how Italian films about the Fascist period have, with suspiciously few exceptions, set their narratives during the war, privileging particularly the last two years, after Italy's armistice and during the Resistance. The films of the 1970s reverse this, focusing with very few exceptions on the mid-1930s, before Italy

joined the Axis or in any case before World War Two. This is an important choice because it allowed filmmakers and audiences to confront the period of highest popularity of the regime and of Mussolini personally. Representing violence and atrocities in this context, as Bertolucci does especially in *Novecento*, automatically removes the relativist alibi of comparing Fascism with Nazism, Mussolini with Hitler, Italians with Germans, notwithstanding the fact that *Novecento*'s chief baddy is called Attila. And, although violence continued not to be the main focus of filmmakers, to see Ferrara's Jews arrested by Italian police and held by Italian infantry soldiers, as in De Sica's adaptation of *Il Giardino dei Finzi-Contini*, or the murder of exiled anti-Fascists in *Il Conformista*, or the Fascist massacres of peasants in *Novecento*, not to mention Pasolini's *German-less Salò*, was nonetheless a powerful and unusual experience of self-analysis.

All in all, then, the historical films of the 1970s were altogether darker, seldom comic, and they abandoned the humanistic and universal commentary of previous decades for a more carefully chiselled historical analysis of Italy's Fascist period. The cohesive, often worthy and widely commendable demand for human pity in the face of a generalised tragedy demanded by pre-1968 films on the subject gave place to a less cathartic interpretation, which focused simultaneously on the individual as the battlefield of totalitarianism and on social classes as its belligerent factions. Metonymy, the preferred rhetorical device of postwar neorealism and of its 1960s revival, was largely replaced by allegory, and the ever-present stereotypical stock characters of the past made room for more symbolic characters, which stood not for a type of person or for a social group but rather for an idea, a psychological drive, a key to the past or the present.

In post-1968 Italian films on Fascism, memory became a point of encounter between present and past, psychoanalysis and politics, individual and class. Hence, memory was also the key to understanding two crucial tensions that move representations of Fascism in the 1970s: first, the psychological response of the individual in the face of totalitarianism; and, second, the class struggle. Marx and Freud pervade these films, but these thematic poles of attraction also reflect, and prove, the presentist concerns of so many filmmakers of the 1970s, who tackled class and the ego as simultaneously relevant to the present and the past. The class struggle offered a (suspiciously) self-contained Marxist explanation of totalitarian ideologies as capitalism's violent response to the rising consciousness of the workers, while speaking to millions of industrial workers in 1970s Italy,[30] who sustained a four-year period of industrial

unrest from 1969 to 1973, and to all those on the left who supported their fight, thus establishing a chilling link between Fascist violence and the Strategy of Tension. Similarly, the films' fascination with fragile egos accorded filmmakers the chance to study human instincts – most notably the need for belonging, survival and the Oedipal urge – and the nature of morality under the intense pressures of totalitarianism, while also continuing the analysis of bourgeois alienation, isolation and decadence in the capitalist society that had since the early 1960s occupied the concerns of Europe's left-wing intellectuals.[31]

Class is crucial, for example, to Francesco Rosi's 1979 adaptation of Carlo Levi's memoir *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli*, in which he recounted his time in internal exile in Aliano (Gagliano in the book and film), in the remote Southern Italian region of Basilicata. Rosi, a committed Communist and master of the political film, was at home in interpreting the gaze of left-wing intellectual Levi on what seemed to him an immutable and proto-historical peasantry, ruled over but untouched by modernity and its tensions, ideology and the nation state. There are echoes of what is arguably Rosi's best film, *Salvatore Giuliano* (1962), in the way the filmmaker lingers over Levi's Southern peasants' 'immobile civilisation'[32]; Rosi juxtaposes long-shots of the region's barren landscape with close-ups of its people, dwelling in particular on rock and skin to draw out an image of the rural working class's perennial struggle against exploitation that starts with and depends upon the very soil whence they seem to have magically emerged. But, in the attempt to draw a universal conclusion, allegorical and ideological, from the people of Aliano, Rosi's ethnographic gaze loses the empathy that Levi had felt, turning these peasants into symbols of their class and forgetting that they were people with an agency and a voice of their own.

Mauro Bolognini's *Libera, Amore Mio* (1975) contains a different celebration of the working class, much more presentist than Rosi's or indeed any of its contemporaries. Bolognini's film tells the story of a woman, the aptly named Libera Amore-Libero Anarchia, and her struggle not to compromise with the regime. The daughter of an anarchist, persecuted for his political ideas in both Liberal and Fascist Italy, Libera has inherited a spirit that cannot be broken. When we first see her, she and her two children – born deliberately out of wedlock – march dressed in red on May Day, a choice the filmmaker endorses by artificially accentuating the colour in contrast to a nondescript and bleak Italy of black shirts and grey flannel suits; the filmmaker juxtaposes this sequence with Mussolini's declaration of war on Ethiopia,[33] undermining its message of Fascist–Italian homogeneity through Libera's

rebellion but also confirming it through her utter isolation. Placed in a framework clearly informed by the feminist and proletarian movements of the 1970s, Bolognini's film is more presentist than historical: it shows the bourgeois family as an obstacle to the Revolution and it proclaims explicitly, and rather didactically, that 'the day Mussolini will fall together with his accomplices will mark the first day of the revolution, not the last.'

The not unfounded but nevertheless myopic rhetoric of the unfinished revolution denies the film a happy ending, as Libera, having survived guerrilla warfare, prison and torture, is finally broken when she finds her Fascist persecutor holding office in liberated Italy: 'you go ahead and make Italy with the Fascists; I am off to revise the recipe for *minestrone*,' she declares to her former Communist comrades. But even her temptation to retreat into the intimacy of the nuclear family is defeated by a random bullet shot by the last Fascist sniper in town: the dying act of the film is to create a link not only between the Fascist civil service and the Christian Democratic one, but also between the PCI's postwar alliances and the historic compromise of the 1970s, moving a sharp critique of the Communists' tentativeness. Historic Fascist violence merges with contemporary neofascism, which in 1975 was a real threat to democracy at all levels: from neighbourhood beatings and Molotov cocktails to the massacres of Piazza Fontana and Piazza della Loggia, from young militants to inveterate black shirts and from local politics to murky institutional connections. Bolognini's revolutionary parable had the significant credit of recognising the tension between the working class's legitimate aspirations to social advancement – represented by Libera's partner, who joins the partisans but suffers political commitment and longs for marriage and a small business of his own – and its revolutionary destiny. But recognition did not translate into understanding: on the one hand, burdening the proletariat with such a destiny marks a patronising self-righteousness shared by Bolognini's film and many of its contemporaries; on the other hand, the choice to kill off Libera, just because of her apparently illegitimate aspiration to concentrate on her own family life, is symptomatic of leftist Italian men's fundamental inability to grasp feminist demands.

No such problems of understanding and identification marred the cinematic representation of Italy's middle class under Fascism. A decadent and pusillanimous bourgeoisie litters left-wing narratives of the *ventennio* during the revolutionary fervours of the 1970s, not to mention Italian films about the Third Reich such as Luchino Visconti's *La Caduta degli Dei* (*The Damned*, 1969) or Cavani's *The Night Porter*, in which

Nazism's nightmare of omnipotence is used to delineate the moral decay of a class simultaneously all-powerful and doomed. If the Italian working classes are the trampled but unbroken soul of the revolution, the Italian bourgeoisie appears either complicit in the rise of Fascism or impotent to stop it, and sometimes both. It is telling, in this context, that the role of educated, left-wing, middle-class men as leaders of the masses in the anti-Fascist Resistance, so predominant in Italian readings of the war from *Roma Città Aperta*'s Manfredi onwards, was deliberately – and with not a little hypocrisy – played down in this period by bourgeois filmmakers who aspired to play exactly such a leadership role.[34] This absence is different from that in the films of the reconstruction period, which avoided intellectual heroes but did not discredit them, and must be interpreted as a product of the Italian left's identity crisis, crushed between comfort and utopias of revolution, between middle-class guilt and a vague and dated analysis of the masses.

Vittorio De Sica's *Il Giardino dei Finzi-Contini* explores the middle class and aristocracy with a remarkable mixture of condemnation and nostalgia that is in many ways quite typical of the period. These traits are also present in the works of Bertolucci and, of course, of Visconti, the Communist aristocrat who, from *Senso* (1954) to *Il Gattopardo* (*The Leopard*, 1963), had always moved so effortlessly among the gilded corridors of the elites. Although not endowed with the affectionate cynicism that Visconti reserves for his own class, De Sica uses the aristocratic Jewish family of the Finzi-Contini to sketch a picture of an elite aloof from politics and baffled by modernity, waiting for its own end. The Finzi-Contini withdraw into their garden-ghetto from an abhorrent society, that of 1938 provincial Italy, arguably at its pettiest and most heinously selfish: a society ruled by a scared and *arriviste* middle class, where Giorgio's Jewish father continues to the last to defend Mussolini and where the chief librarian enforces the racial laws against Giorgio because he has 'a family'. Fascist Italy, where everybody has a suitable alibi for inaction – the family, Nazi Germany, society itself and its rules – comes across as a place as bleak as the fogs that envelop Ferrara and the Po Valley, where the only brief moments of respite are idyllic adolescent afternoons inside the Finzi-Continis' walled garden.

In *Il Giardino dei Finzi-Contini*, De Sica extends the symbiosis between the garden as a physical defence and a psychological retreat to a close overall relationship between class and psychoanalytical struggle. Hints of an incestuous relationship between the Finzi-Contini siblings Micòl and Alberto are to be understood within this broader parallelism, as a symbol of their class's isolation.[35] Their mansion is a place where the

ego, id and superego battle for predominance: there, for example, Micòl consummates her affair with Malnate, the Milanese factory worker, aware of Giorgio's peeping gaze; there, Giorgio seeks the relief of a dominating discipline in the Finzi-Continis' library, where De Sica deliberately frames him behind bars, in a refuge that is also a prison. Nevertheless, De Sica's film always falls back on class and politics: ultimately, the director of *Ladri di Biciclette* and *Sciuscià* is playing at the trendy subject of psychoanalysis, and it serves little purpose within the context of the film, save offering an atmosphere of impending doom, evocative but also vacuously formalist, and alienating Bassani from the project.[36] The synthesis of the two key drivers of the period does not work here, but the film succeeds in representing Fascist Italy through a gaze that remains true to the essence of history, if not to Bassani's own vision: there is an eerie and miserable normality outside the mysterious garden, and particularly in the banality of Italian racism, which is rarely encountered in Italy's filmography of Fascism.

Less explicitly historical, but much more consistent in the analysis of the human mind, would be the historical films of Fellini, Cavani, Pasolini and Lina Wertmüller. Quintessentially different in style, tone and content, these authors nevertheless shared a fascination with memory, choice and post-Freudian psychoanalysis, specifically the interaction between sex, power and politics, which fits perfectly within the cultural climate of the 1970s. Fellini's *Amarcord* and *Roma* are nostalgic reconstructions of a past that takes on mythical traits: the former deals with his adolescence in the provincial town of Rimini, where Fellini was born; the latter with the city of Rome, where Fellini moved as a young man. Both films deal harshly with Fascism as an ideology and as a corruptor of individuals, but empathetically with the motley collection of circus freaks, voluptuous women and horny men who populate Fellini's fantastical memory. As Bondanella has shown, Fellini reserves the same ferocious satire for all ideologies, both human and divine, which he charges with conning individuals into abandoning their own spirit and imagination, undoubtedly the centre of Fellini's moral and aesthetic compass.[37] Although he is not uninterested in politics, let alone neutral, Fellini sees even Marxism as an opiate for the masses, nowhere more clearly than in the traffic jam scene in *Roma* in which the taunts of rival football teams merge into those of left-wing demonstrators.

Fellini's past is a place of the mind populated by truly remarkable characters who manage to be both fantastical creatures and caricatured paradigms of Italian society. He sketches out petty middle-class conformists, aggressive cowards, big fish in small social ponds,

bespectacled teachers, homeless Shakespearean fools, blind Oedipal accordion players, mothers, wives and mistresses – these often in interchangeable roles; all these characters are regulars of Italian filmmaking, and of Italian filmmaking about Fascism in particular, even if nowhere have they ever looked or sounded as they do in Fellini's works.

The director's uniqueness, however, is in the fact that he never gives in to the temptation of attaching universal meaning to an individual character; Fellini's coherence in his dislike of political syntheses is evident in the ambiguity of his characters, the sympathy with which they are ultimately portrayed and the privileging of symbol over allegory. Fellini's memory is a private memory which he shares with, but does not impose onto, his audiences. Thus, Fascism can be caricatured without ever running the risk of downplaying its seriousness, as many earlier narratives of the *ventennio* had done, and Italians can be *brava gente* without hiding their choices and their collective responsibility.

Fellini's memory is just the kind of sacred and nostalgic ritual that conservative historian Pierre Nora mourns in his *Lieux de Mémoire*[38]: a pre-historic practice of social and personal identity-formation bulldozed by modernity and by the scientific *hubris* of historiography. Fellini is in a sense uninterested in history, in causality and context: historiographical and political interpretations of Fascism do not compel him in the way that they did other filmmakers of the 1970s. History is neither absent nor superficial in these films, but it is an outsider, threatening to intrude on the private fantasies that, in Fellini's poetics, suffer – and make – history (Figures 7.1 and 7.2).

Fellini's Fascism is an 'adolescent' ideology, hormonal and obsessed with appearance, and the ideology of his adolescence, in the province of the Romagna. Yet teenage angst, rebellious streaks and the desire to break the rules emerges in Fellini's narratives only as a sexual tension, never as a political one. Adolescence is only half of Fellini's story, then: in the mid-1930s Fascism was not a spotty and self-conscious teenager but a corpulent middle-aged man, self-satisfied and arrogant. There are two Fascisms here, as there are two memories: Fellini's private Fascism is an adolescent's dream of virginity and virility, voyeuristic and obsessed with taboos; his public one is a provincial utopia of middle-class professional men relishing their own hypocrisy. Fellini's synthesis, which may or may not satisfy, is mediated by sex and the understanding of Fascism not as adolescence but as a middle-age crisis, buffeted by the conflicting tensions of status and lost youth, and framed perfectly by Mussolini's own, much-flaunted, duplicitous persona as family man and serial adulterer.

Figure 7.1 Crammed in: Fascism as a place of the mind
Source: Courtesy of Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.

The desire to find allegorical and psychological symbolism for the Fascist past in nearly all the films of this period was both an intuition and a fashion: as an original insight it dramatically changed the representation of the Fascist period, yet as a stylistic and ideological trend it often amounted to little more than posturing. In Liliana Cavani's *The Night Porter*, for example, the feminist analysis of the totalitarian attempt to control intimacy and morality found a thoughtful and

Figure 7.2 Adolescent Fascism: private and public dreams interact
Source: Courtesy of Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.

provocative illustration, but also one of its most pretentious incarnations. Cavani drafts a disturbing tale of a concentration camp survivor, Lucia, who actively seeks a re-enactment and partial reversal in postwar Austria of her sadomasochistic wartime relationship with an SS doctor, Max. Cavani's film, which was banned in Italy until after the divorce referendum of 12 May,[39] makes powerful points about the interaction between private and public memories, and between memory and amnesia, conscious and subconscious. The film also acted as a provocative representation of the consequences of trauma and as a careful observer of neofascist continuities and, in so doing, contributed to reinforce key traits of left-wing memory construction present in almost all the films post-1968 cultural revolution. However, *The Night Porter* failed dramatically in both its feminist and its Marxist agendas when it stretched its analysis to a gratuitous suggestion that the roles of victim and persecutor are both interchangeable and deliberately adopted.

The 1970s fascination with the parallelism between sex and politics, which was itself torn between insight and pompous affectation, analysis and formalism, was based on the pivotal role that power plays in both sexual and political relationships. Power thus became the link between sex and politics, but this reasoning could lead equally to a much-needed feminist denunciation of a patriarchal domination of society that stretched from universal to personal, from the institutional to the intimate sphere, or to a shallow aestheticism that resented, and often adopted, the same fetishistic voyeurism it meant to denounce.

The scene of Lucia's Salome dance in *The Night Porter*, as much as the clandestine fling between Micòl and Malnate in *Il Giardino dei Finzi-Contini*, is a paradigmatic example of this ambiguity, which Annette Insdorf has described particularly well as 'the "aesthetic" that "becomes anaesthetic." '[40]

Lina Wertmüller's two films set in the Fascist period, *Film d'Amore e d'Anarchia* (*Love and Anarchy*, 1973) and *Pasqualino Settebellezze* (*Seven Beauties*, 1975), adopted a completely opposite tone to Cavani's, but otherwise share with her a similar ambivalence. The story of Pasqualino, the petty Neapolitan gangster obsessed with his sisters' honour who ends up in a Nazi concentration camp and returns to Naples to find all seven of them working as prostitutes, is reminiscent of the false victim/persecutor binary suggested in *The Night Porter.* Pasqualino is first a murderer, then a victim, then again a murderer when his captors force him to execute his friend in the camp or be himself killed in turn; Pasqualino, who is obsessed with his sisters' honour, is forced to have sex with the hideous camp commandant, thus prostituting himself for survival just like his sisters and girlfriend.[41] However, Wertmüller's moral ambiguities are framed as dilemmas, not as certainties. Pasqualino's choices seem random: he has agency, of course, but it resides in an instinctive and anti-intellectual place, not in Cavani's cold and calculated choice. The absence of traditional morality present in both Lucia and Pasqualino thus develops into totally different representations, explained by the filmmakers' interpretation of the drives that dictate human behaviour in both politics and intimacy: an innate survival instinct for Wertmüller; a desire for self-destruction for Cavani. Pasqualino's primal needs of survivalism and familism serve Wertmüller simultaneously as stereotypes of gendered Neapolitan localism – and through that of Italianness – and as a political interpretation of the rise of Fascism and of the continuities between Fascist and postwar Italy. Thus, the opening credits, with Enzo Jannacci's *Quelli che . . .* accompanying footage of Mussolini's Italy, encapsulate an historical analysis which the ensuing farce can sometimes conceal.

The animalesque love of life of Wertmüller's nymphomaniacs and the bleak love of death of Cavani's sadomasochists meet in Pier Paolo Pasolini's trilogy of life, which *Salò o le 120 Giornate di Sodoma* (*Salò or the 120 Days of Sodom*, 1975) transformed into a 'tetralogy of death'.[42] Banned almost everywhere for its extreme brutality,[43] Pasolini's last film pushed the neo-Freudian analysis of totalitarianism as a place of the mind to its extremes.[44] While, as we will see, Bertolucci mastered the analysis of totalitarianism as a collective superego that attracts

individuals fearful of their basic instincts, Pasolini in *Salò* evokes it as the triumph of the id, unbridled from the mind's structure. Thus Pasolini, who had personal experience of the brutal civil war in Italy's North-East, utilises the dying throes of Fascism as a metaphor for a hubristic bourgeoisie, drunk on power, intent not only on exploiting religion's temporal control of the masses but also on replacing the source of its spiritual power. *Salò* is a nightmare of dehumanisation that wants not only symbolically to recall all manners of exploitation, both within a Marxist analysis of society and within a Freudian analysis of the mind, but also to move a direct historical accusation against a Fascist regime that thrived and built its consensus on the legitimation of the abuse of power at all levels of society.

What the films of the 1970s have in common, then, is a shared reading of the Fascist experience dominated by the Marxist and Freudian analyses that are present in different degrees in all the films discussed. Through these frameworks, the filmmakers invited the audiences to transcend historical analysis and engage in a political reading of the present, framed now by a suggestion of an all-Italian political continuity, now by a more universal hint of psychological and behavioural contiguity with Fascism.

Yet, even in the plethora of phallic symbols and figurative castrations, patricides and metaphorical incests, oracles and blind storytellers that populate Italian cinema of the 1970s, nothing screams class warfare and Oedipal syndrome like Bertolucci's Fascist trilogy.[45] There, sweeping collective shots outline the working class and peasantry as an immutable and invincible historical force; the camera lingers lovingly on leathery hands and wrinkled faces, heroines and heroes with the strength of granite and the texture of red, human-moulding clay. Meanwhile, with the same aesthetic fascination but arguably a subtler touch, the silk gowns and immaculate postures of rich ladies and powerful men frame their own decadent class, consciously and callously gliding towards the abyss. With opposite results, both sides of this unending class war are moved by the same drives, by the same tension between superego and id, by the same relationship with sex and death.

In Bertolucci's adaptation of Alberto Moravia's *Il Conformista*, sex is a sinful and depraved urge to be controlled. Through a fluid narrative perspective that alternately distances and identifies the viewer with the film's main character,[46] Bertolucci tells the story of Marcello Clerici, an agent of the Fascist political police *Organizzazione per la Vigilanza e la Repressione dell'Antifascismo* (Organisation for Vigilance and Repression of Anti-Fascism, OVRA). Clerici travels to Paris with his new bride, to

contact and eventually kill his exiled former professor, the Gramscian character of Gianluca Quadri, and his wife Anna. As Chris Wagstaff has proven with his customary precision,[47] Clerici is identified immediately as a repressed character, lying in bed fully clothed and with his hands together, lit by the intermittent red light of a nearby cinema playing Renoir's *La Vie Est à Nous* (*Life Is Ours*, 1936).[48] That is the first of many glorious symbolic shots – most notably those around the oppressive spatiality of the Fascist architecture of the EUR district in Rome or the constant use of symbolic bars to imprison Clerici – that reveal Clerici as a compulsive conformist seeking the suppression of his own individual identity. Clerici's need to be controlled comes from traumatic childhood experiences, specifically his sexual abuse by Lino and from his own parents' psychoses: his mother, a drug addict, is a bulging subconscious and lives in a luscious jungle and a cluttered, decadent villa; his father is a failed, defeated superego, who resides in a psychiatric hospital, where a straightjacket can barely contain him. Crushed between these powerful influences, Clerici's ego welcomes the chance to fulfil its Oedipal destiny in killing his intellectual father, Quadri, and having Anna Quadri seduce his own wife. Bertolucci's Fascism is a repressive force, politically and psychologically, which attracts to it those who wish to repress their own feelings as much as those who fantasise the act of repressing others. Clerici seeks in the OVRA not only acceptance and a refuge from homosexual fantasies, but also the ability to extend to others his own violent traumas.

The final scene of *Il Conformista* perfectly epitomises Clerici's ongoing self-repression, which is not sated even by the playing out of his childhood trauma and the projection of his own Fascist crimes onto his friend Italo, the blind anti-Semitic propagandist. Italo is swept away by a triumphant crowd, who wave tricolours and red flags and simultaneously sing the *Inno di Mameli* and the *Internazionale*, but Marcello is not: 'he has still to face his inner reality, which he does in the last shot as he turns and looks at the naked male prostitute behind the bars.'[49] In the throng that washes away Clerici's political identity but not his personal one, Bertolucci masterfully utilises a sharp and almost painful reminder of the compromises of liberation to merge private and public memories, refining his representation of conformism as a social symptom of the relationship between the individual and power, rather than as a peculiarity of totalitarian regimes and repressed individuals.

In the same year, the Resistancialist mythology of postwar Italy would form the starting point of Bertolucci's second film on Fascism, *La Strategia del Ragno*,[50] filmed for TV before *Il Conformista* yet narratively its

virtual sequel. In *Strategia del Ragno*, Athos Magnani Jr visits his family's native Tara – named from *Gone with the Wind*'s quintessential ancestral home – to unweave the story of his father, Athos Sr, apparently killed at the hands of the Fascists in 1936 while planning an attempt on Mussolini's life.[51] In the course of his investigation, Athos Jr discovers that his father had in fact been a Fascist spy, murdered by his co-conspirators, who had then exploited his memory to create a useful anti-Fascist martyr, although the possibility is also left open that Athos Sr took on this role willingly, precisely to allow such a figure to be constructed. In the uncertainty, the 'blank, unchiseled eyes' of the martyr's statue in the village's main square[52] now crystallise the village's memory, as gratifying as it is false. Athos Jr remains physically trapped by this ambiguous past, which he cannot quite grasp or judge, let alone control.[53]

Athos is identified with his father not only by having the same actor play both characters, but also by an ambiguous narrative framework which uses constant flashbacks and symbolic imagery to blend the two.[54] The younger Magnani's inability to free himself of his father, through knowledge or even through his symbolic re-killing, embodies perfectly the post-1968 obsession with memories and identities, both individual and inter-generational. The contradictions of the postwar generation are given no resolution: they will remain full of certainties yet constantly in search of meaning; they will continue to feel suffocated by their parents' memories yet inextricably indebted to them. And, following a similar pattern, Italy's dominant memory of the long Second World War takes a battering and walks out largely unscathed on the other side: Athos Sr's story and his statue are safe; Clerici's life does not affect the totalitarian nationalist–Communist narratives that wash Italo away, regardless of whether the blind Fascist will be drowned or cleansed, to foresee new and more suitable tales; thus, the memory work of the *sessantottini* is more useful in revealing the disturbing relationship between past and present than in uncovering the past.

Class is certainly part of Clerici's and Magnani's existence, not least as a powerful force in demanding the former's conformism, but Freud undoubtedly influences both of Bertolucci's 1970 films much more than Marx does. Six years later, however, with *Novecento*, Bertolucci would achieve the synthesis between the two in a spectacular fashion both splendid and crass. With Italy's democracy under attack and the Communist Party torn between its first (and last) chance to obtain the fabled relative majority of the votes and the need to shore up the institutions of the state by seeking a compromise with the government, with

the resulting threat of further radicalising the extra-parliamentary left if they did so, Bertolucci's historical epic provided an impassioned defence of the basic righteousness of the Communist idea, even adapted to coexist with the capitalist reality.[55]

Novecento is an historical epic that follows the relationship between the landowning dynasty, the Berlinghieri family, and that of their share-croppers, the Dalcò, as it unfolds against the backdrop of Italy's history between 1900 and 1945. Three generations of the two clans, from the patriarchs Leonida Dalcò and Alfredo Berlinghieri Sr to their grandchildren Olmo and Alfredo Jr, play out four season-like ages of Italian history: first, in a summer bathed in golden colours that represents Liberal Italy and the Risorgimento, they coexist in a pre-capitalist and quasi-feudal relationship based on an imagined mutual respect based on their shared dependence on the successful management of the land; then, as the older generation dies out and the leaves fall, the two families deal with the onset of capitalist practices – World War One being one of these – that force the Dalcò to find a new class awareness in trade unionism; later, a rigid winter sets in as the Fascists sanction the final separation of the two families, shattering even the juvenile homoerotic rivalry between Olmo and Alfredo Jr; finally, a new spring arrives, slightly late, on 25 April 1945, when the liberation from the Fascist oppressor also spells the final demise of the landowners' patronal rights.[56]

In this orthodox Marxist reading of Italy's twentieth century, perhaps the arrival point of the transition towards a classical realist tradition started in *Il Conformista*, Bertolucci celebrates the progressive role of the Communist Party in uplifting the working classes[57]: Olmo's description of 'The Party' – back in the days when one did not to specify which party one meant – as the peasants work and celebrate the day's slaughter of a pig is more a declaration of love than a political manifesto. The mythical qualities of 'The Party' are the same as those of the people that constitute its membership, tragically resilient, fatally bound to an endless wait, and yet equally irreparably confident that the awaited fate will be both just and triumphant. Thus, the working class and the Party can withstand unspeakable cruelties and yet bury their dead and exhume their red flags, sawn up into a vast banner to cover the tilled earth and frame the trial of its owner by its workers. Like Visconti first, and then Pasolini and other less inspired filmmakers such as Rosi, Bertolucci is fascinated with the aesthetics of the proletariat, the epiphenomena of its intimate relationship with the means of production – so intimate, in fact, that they are all metaphorically mothered by the earth and that young Olmo Dalcò, named after the elm tree and Oedipal from the start,

tries to make love to it. Montanaro's face, earless and doomed, the faces of Anita's octogenarian pupils, toothless and wrinkly, or the leathery hands and croaky voices of the peasant women are the physical signs of their ancestral righteousness (Figures 7.3–7.5).

Figures 7.3–7.5 The peasants' physical absences become symbolic castrations and epiphenomena of exploitation (*1900*)

The historical materialism of this poetic and moving film means that Fascism cannot but be interpreted as the brutal enforcer of the bourgeoisie. And so it is, embodied as it is by the character of Attila, who is a thug with no vision of the future beyond becoming one of the bosses he serves. Downplaying Fascism's ideological framework is a questionable approach, but ignoring its ability to attract popular support and put down roots on the ground, in the provinces as in the cities, is a much more serious transgression. Hand in hand with this enticing but partial vision, the psychotic characters of Attila and his bride Regina – a perverted, sadistic, almost literally bloodthirsty symbolic union of foreign barbarism (Attila) and Italian monarchy (Regina) – are a throwback to a kind of evil, inhuman, monstrous Fascism that not only adds little or nothing to historical understanding, but also misleads to the construction of a Fascism divorced from humanity and, therefore, existing outside history – an approach, and a mistake, more commonly associated with representations of Nazism.

Relegating Fascism to a discrete historical parenthesis may not be what Bertolucci intended, given the film's analysis of the class struggle as an endless and ongoing one, as the film's final sequence of the ageing Olmo and Alfredo still squabbling clearly suggests. Nevertheless, that is one consequence of the film's Marxist mythology, one of *Novecento*'s many contradictions. On the one hand, the film indicts Italian society like few others, without according it any of the alibis left open by Zampa's ambiguity or Salce's comedy: Bertolucci superbly visualises the almost literal christening of Fascism by having the bosses set down their hunting rifles against the baptismal font; he chastises conformism and cowardice by dwelling on the silence behind the village's shuttered windows during the chilling funeral of the murdered elderly peasants. On the other hand, the need to exalt the working class as a monolith weakens the film's case irremediably, culminating in Olmo's breaking the fourth wall to address the audience:

> The Fascists are not like mushrooms, that pop up like that overnight; it was the bosses that sowed the Fascists, nurtured them and paid them, and with bosses the Fascists earned more and more, to the point that they no longer knew what to do with it. Then they invented war: they sent us to Africa, Russia, Greece, Albania and Spain. But we always pay, the proletariat, the peasants, the workers, the poor; they pay.

Even as the proletariat indicts Alfredo and all his class, arguing the bourgeoisie's responsibility for Fascism, the film's Freudian subtext suggests

that Olmo's action and inaction is psychoanalytical rather than political, thus playing down agency and choice, on both sides. The difference between Olmo and Alfredo, virtual brothers – born the same day, both virtually motherless and metaphorically fathered by their grandfathers – is that the latter has to reconcile his Oedipal instincts with the traditional role society imposes upon him, while the former does not, because family is for the Dalcò a tribal concept, not a civic or Christian one. Thus, sex between Ada and Alfredo is always punctuated by death and denial: at first Ada is pretending to be blind and the scene flirts with rape as the Communists' communal house is burnt down; later, on holiday in Naples, they are both high on cocaine as a telegram reaches Alfredo to inform him of his father's death. However, Olmo and Anita's relationship does not necessitate the legitimacy of wedlock: it is free and equal, and therefore fertile. Where Alfredo and Ada's line is broken, the union of peasant Olmo and teacher Anita gives rise to a new woman, a working-class intellectual – also called Anita after Garibaldi's wife – who will act as the sentinel of the new era from atop a haystack and minute the trial against the boss, declaring: 'everything that is done must be written down and everything that is written down must be read.'

Class and the ego allow an interaction between private and public memory which ensures these films' longevity and their rare 'explicit' and 'implicit' usefulness as historical sources[58]: these are sites of memory where audiences are invited to bring their own remembrances, voluntary and involuntary, and let them engage with society's dominant narrative of the past.[59] Nevertheless, even as they trashed the uplifting national stereotype constructed since the war, collectively justifying the epithet of revolutionary, most historical films of the 1970s failed comprehensively to move on from that stereotype and, in particular, failed dramatically to take on the ongoing taboo of Italy's African colonialism and the crimes committed in its pursuit.

The films' historical context, as this chapter has shown, was crucial both to their revisionism and to its partiality and short-term successes. On the one hand, in fact, the Italian 1968 movements' failure to topple the DC domination and the threats faced by Italian democracy encouraged an exploration of the roots of the Republican period, which was both historiographical – an examination of the mistakes made during the liberation – and allegorical, that is, related to contemporary antidemocratic threats. But, on the other hand, the same failure to achieve a change of leadership in the present safeguarded the purity and partiality of the Communists' interpretation of the past, and especially of the

Resistance, by not tainting them with power, or at least not until their external support for Giulio Andreotti's 1978–79 government of National Solidarity in the aftermath of Moro's murder by the BR.

That purity fills the shining eyes of the partisans in Lizzani's *Mussolini: Ultimo Atto*, for instance, a moving, nostalgic and genuinely grateful representation. Never since Rossellini's neorealist works had the resistance fighters been so resolute and humanitarian: Lizzani's Communist partisans, young, wise and handsome, carry the dread of violence in their eyes and yet fight with the ardour and strength of those who value human life and have justice on their side. The problem of retaining such purity, what we might call the 'mythological materialism' of the Italian Communist Party, is one that Lizzani shared with many Italian filmmakers of the 1960s and 1970s and that reflected closely the contradictions of the Communist Party, often unable to understand the very class it was meant to represent. Many Communist Italian filmmakers thus inadvertently marginalised and disempowered the working class even as they attempted to elect it to an almost epic status. From Luchino Visconti's fishermen in *La Terra Trema* (*The Earth Trembles*, 1947), passing by De Sanctis's shepherds in *Non c'è Pace tra gli Ulivi* (*Under the Olive Tree*, 1950) and Lizzani's factory workers in *Achtung Banditi!* (*Attention, Bandits!* 1951), all the way to Visconti's Lucanian paragon of virtue in *Rocco e i Suoi Fratelli* (*Rocco and His Brothers*, 1960), Pasolini's raw Roman youths of *Accattone* (1961), or *La Ricotta* (1963), and finally to Bertolucci's sharecropping dynasty in *Novecento*, the Italian working classes have been endowed with uncommon qualities of awareness, bravery and self-sacrifice, usually by well-educated, bourgeois, orientalist *auteurs*. Crucially, when applied to representing and remembering the history of Fascist Italy, these characteristics perpetuate some of the cardinal ideas of the *italiani brava gente* narrative, albeit by narrowing it down significantly to include just one social class. Instead of casting an accusatory eye on Italians of the *ventennio*, however, this interpretation of the Italian working class perpetuated the myth of Italy as victim of Fascism, refusing to see the success of the regime's populist message with the masses.

This was the era of the *intellettuale impegnato*, of committed, or *engagé*, Marxist intellectuals deeply involved in the doctrine of leadership of the working class and firmly convinced that the briefly parallel movements of students and workers experienced in 1968–69 signalled the real opportunity for a Communist revolution in Italy. The link between what they saw as the failed revolution of 1943–45 and the imminent one of the 1970s explains many of the traits of the films of this period,

their inspiration in drawing parallels between past and present as well as their ultimate inability to contextualise the past in a way that would permanently undermine the dominant narrative of *italiani brava gente* in the way that Ophuls and Malle did for France, or Fassbinder, Herzog or Schlöndorff for West Germany. Constrained by that unchanged framework – the civic religion of a spontaneous, overwhelmingly popular, Communist, working-class-led Resistance as both national liberation and failed revolution – the 1970s filmmakers' own revolution of the representation of Fascism also could not but be unfinished.

8
Ettore Scola's Ordinary Day

On 20 May 1977, the day after the screening of Ettore Scola's *Una Giornata Particolare* (*A Special Day*, 1977) at the Cannes Film Festival, Italian newspapers read with the mundane tragedy of war bulletins. The revolutionary Marxists of *Prima Linea*, a Red Brigades (BR) splinter group, had attempted the sabotage of Milan's underground railway network with explosives; meanwhile, 5000 police and soldiers were drafted to Rome by Interior Minister Francesco Cossiga to police tens of thousands of tertiary students who met at La Sapienza University to discuss their movement's direction and protest against Law n. 54 of 5 March 1977: by reforming the dates of several Bank Holidays it had, apparently, 'gifted Ascension Day to the Bosses'.[1] The day after, the same newspapers continued their litany of violence: the Red Brigades had knee-capped a middle-ranking militant of the MSI and, not to be upstaged, neofascist terrorists of the *Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari* (Armed Revolutionary Groups, NAR) had executed a Milan jeweller during one of the armed robberies routinely carried out to fund the group's activities. Meanwhile, the papers reported progress on the compromise agreement between Aldo Moro and Enrico Berlinguer: 'almost done',[2] according to one reporter. The deal would never materialise, thanks also to the BR's murder of Moro the following year. The violence and negotiations, the underlying tension and the sense of impotence, the simultaneous coexistence of a vision for the future and the lack of any hope, of mass mobilisation and widespread disillusionment with society and politics, all superbly mark the Italy of the so-called *anni di piombo*, the years of lead, during which bombs in the underground and the batons of riot police constituted not a special day but just a normal one.

This is undeniably a snapshot of a snapshot, but one that unfortunately frames the period all too well, and with it also the importance

of Scola's analysis of the past and commentary on the present. The multiple threats to democracy, from outside and within, as well as the democratic institutions' own temptation to suspend themselves through special laws and grand coalitions, arguably informed the film's making just as much as they filled the pages of the country's newspapers. This chapter follows from the outline of the post-1968 obsession with class and the Freudian synthesis of sex and power to zoom in on a single film, *Una Giornata Particolare*, which stands out as much for its careful, curious, honest, open-minded and empathetic analysis of the Fascist period as for its relative lack of scholarly attention.

The latter was probably motivated, initially, by a degree of critical condescension towards Scola's cinema, not as *engagé* as that of his more prominent contemporaries. Indicative of these attitudes is Micciché's comment on the director's '360 degree conversion', part of a brief but positive mention of *Una Giornata Particolare*'s 'dexterity in psychological touch and environmental sketch'.[3] Tullio Kezich's recent edition of the script, with an introduction and a snapshot of the reception,[4] did not rectify the lack of scholarly work on Scola's film, among which the most useful and notable contributions remain Zinni's concise review in the context of a broader discussion of the late 1970s,[5] and Millicent Marcus's acute comparative analysis of Scola's war films, focusing particularly on *Concorrenza Sleale* (*Unfair Competition*, 2001).[6]

Ettore Scola's *Una Giornata Particolare* is an intimate portrait of the encounter between two people in a desolate tenement during Hitler's visit to Rome on 6 May 1938. The film begins with a six-minute introduction consisting of archival footage edited from the original newsreels of the Istituto Luce, hailing the Führer's descent southwards from the Brenner pass down a jubilant peninsula: cheering people line station after station, sanctioning the triumphal union 'between two races made to understand each other', 'of the *fascio* and the swastika', in a marriage of 'pomp and the most majestic simplicity', as the newsreel put it with plenty of the former and none of the latter.[7] This introduction sets the backdrop of nationalistic fervour and conformist delirium against which the story of Antonietta and Gabriele will be played out.

As the notes 'full of virile sweetness' of Mussolini's legionnaires give way to the announcement of the following day's parade, the black and white footage jump cuts to a huge red swastika being unfurled. The camera withdraws, now in silence, rapidly veers up and to the left to reveal a multi-storey building, then tilts down again to show an old lady unfurling another standard, Italy's flag, next to the Reich's one. The flags provide the transition, both sharp and smooth, between the footage of

Hitler's visit and the ordinary Romans who provided it with such an impressive choreography. The scene links reality and fiction, moving from the spectacle of Rome's historic centre to a popular tenement of the Nomentano neighbourhood, one of the trademark residential areas of the urban expansion of Rome under Fascism. In the resilient chills of a spring daybreak, the camera follows what seems like an endless panoramic shot around the multiple buildings that skirt a communal courtyard where only the caretaker and a lonely rubbish collector anticipate the imminent chaos of the people's awakening. The impressive silence of this sequence, following on from the fanfare of the archival footage, elegantly eases the viewer's transition between History and story, between politics and the individual.

As the first electric lights come on, Antonietta's character makes her entrance. Antonietta is a housewife and mother of six; she is up before the others, juggling clothes, combs, coffees and quarrels, evenly dispensing cuddles and threats, sermons and sustenance, lectures and love. Scola and co-scriptwriters Sergio Amidei – the Communist veteran of 90 or so films over five decades, including all of Rossellini's and most of Zampa's war-themed films – and Maurizio Costanzo succeeded in imbuing her daily chores with political, historical and narrative meaning without overburdening the character with didactic dialogue or trite stereotypes. Thus, it is clear that Antonietta's 'special' morning is not that dissimilar from her normal ones: it starts a little earlier and is a little more rushed, perhaps; the clothes she has prepared are parade uniforms rather than office and school ones; nevertheless, it consists of the same work and the same faces, the same mix of pride and frustration. Through Antonietta's special normality, gender roles are apparent from the beginning, and with them also a first chink in the wall that reassuringly separates past and present patriarchalisms.[8] Between the brushing of teeth and a sip of milky coffee, a fight for the bathroom and a minute stolen from the day, the audience subtly learns of Fascist and Italian men and women: on the one hand are Antonietta's husband's trips to the brothel, their second son's fondness for porn and drawn-on moustache, their younger son's worries about his 'unfascist' frame, their youngest's name, Littorio, like the fasces themselves; on the other hand are the girls' fussing, feminine and Fascist, the gendered expectation of help with the housework, and the mother's indispensable but completely thankless, almost invisible presence. With no sign of the motherly devotion ubiquitous in popular culture, Antonietta is an agent in her own victimhood: when she is finally alone, her humming Beniamino Gigli's 1940 hit song *Mamma* – 'Mummy, I am so happy because I'm coming

back to you . . . ' – is not only anachronistic (the action takes place two years earlier) but also has the melody of the bitter mockery of a national icon.[9]

The Italian, Catholic and Fascist mother finally waves goodbye to her troop of Italian, Catholic and Fascist soldiers. In one of two choral scenes in the film that are rendered even more impressive by their rarity, the tenement empties out to reveal a society more conformist than militarised. Each man strides out in his own uniform, mimicking the Duce; each woman leaves in hers, mimicking his women: fertile Rachele, glossy Claretta and, for the young, the chaste black-and-white outfits of the Daughters of the She-Wolf. They are normal people on their way to their 'special day', but the filmmakers take great care not to reveal any in particular, not to delve into their motivation. While it is clear that the Fatherland's fateful day is not necessarily all that is on their mind, that ideology shares its place with more or less cumbersome concerns of their own – young love affairs, hopes of promotion, furtive glimpses of the great leaders and other celebrities – no one seems to go begrudgingly.

Many other filmmakers could well have taken the narrative and political shortcut of metonymy when faced with representing such a militant multitude; 'they were not all militant,' they might have hastened to clarify, and thus proceeded to provide a series of caricatures: one ecstatic, boastful and pathetic Fascist (Arcovazzi in *Il Federale*?), one sadistic racist foaming at the mouth (Attila in *Novecento*?), one silly girl wishing to see for herself if Hitler was as handsome as in the magazines (Piscitello's daughter in *Anni Difficili*?), one pusillanimous bureaucrat afraid to lose his job (any of Zampa's men?), one dutiful and apolitical boy (Innocenzi in *Tutti a Casa*?), and other such types. We have met them all many times over since 1945 and they have, to some extent, become the stylised reality of an era: 'they went out of choice, or force or just curiosity', as one reviewer gratuitously decided to put it.[10] But Guglielmo Biraghi, *Il Messaggero*'s critic, was seeing what he expected to see, because, in truth, Scola decides not to elaborate on their motivation. As we will see, this fact is crucial in the political and historical analysis of Fascist Italy developed in his film.

But, for now, we will allow the giggling solemnity of the Fascist masses to amble away with a gait halfway between the joviality of well-fed Bank Holiday strollers and the self-importance of parading armies. They leave behind only two of their numbers: Antonietta, too busy with the house in spite of her desire to go, and the caretaker, a malevolent old woman with unkind and all-seeing eyes. For a few hours, though, Antonietta is alone, free to finish off the children's leftover breakfast, to read the racist

comic strips in their magazines, to clean and tidy up the house. And free to meet the man in the sixth-floor flat in the building across the courtyard from hers, Gabriele, courtesy of an open window and an escaped parakeet. When Antonietta rings his doorbell, Gabriele is apparently intent on writing farewell notes, probably before committing suicide with the gun on his desktop.

The state persecutes Gabriele because of his homosexuality: he has lost his job as a broadcaster on state radio, EIAR, and will imminently be deported to internal exile in the Sardinian mining centre of Carbonia, the ideal Fascist town built from scratch by the government in 1938. Faced with Antonietta's normality, her escaped pet, Fascist husband and six Fascist children, Gabriele is the first to mention the '*giornata particolare*' that he is having. In his case, this should probably be rendered as an odd, or awkward day, rather than as the special day of the film's English translation, although the particularity of Gabriele's day will change as it goes on, ending perhaps in an experience that could indeed be described as 'special'.

Thrown off course but also encouraged by Antonietta's interruption, Gabriele in turn perturbs Antonietta with his politeness and gentle elegance, qualities alien to the ideal Fascist males she is surrounded by. For a few hours their relationship will ebb and flow following the patterns of Gabriele's desire for human warmth and Antonietta's attraction, tempered by guilt and fear of the nosy caretaker. She warns Antonietta about Gabriele's anti-Fascism, defeatism and other assorted faults unsuccessfully designed to hint at his homosexuality, but Antonietta only realises that he is gay when he rebuffs her melodramatic advances on the communal terrace where they are collecting laundry. Thus Antonietta and Gabriele's emotional embrace, following shock, anger and humiliation, eventually translates into a physical one, which may change little or nothing of who they are and who they will be: as the evening draws on the tired and elated multitude returns and Antonietta goes back to feeding it, while Gabriele finally receives the summons of the political police, who arrest him and lead him to his ferry. The only sign that remains of their day together is Gabriele's copy of Alexandre Dumas's *The Three Musketeers*, now in Antonietta's pantry, with plates and cups: the few possessions that are only hers.

The 'prudish adultery' of Antonietta and Gabriele, as Giovanni Grazzini has described it,[11] represents a disarming reversal of the protagonists Sophia Loren's and Marcello Mastroianni's types: the curvy Italian diva, melodramatic and passionate, becomes a mother and housewife with no sex appeal; the Latin lover, smooth and sophisticated, now finds

women sexually unattractive. Even though they make love, in a sweet but desperate manner, they are asexualised sex symbols: for Gabriele sex is forbidden, a secret, a shame, and for Antonietta it is a routine physical act, stripped of pleasure and excitement; domestic enslavement for Antonietta and political persecution for Gabriele, sexuality is a jail sentence for both. To take such a recognisable on-screen couple, who had been made famous by their sexual charge in the striptease scene in Vittorio De Sica's *Matrimonio all'Italiana* (*Marriage Italian Style*, 1964), and completely undermine their relationship was an inspired choice: Tullio Kezich would call it 'the most spectacular resurrection since Lazarus'.[12] Yet there is more at play here: Scola's reversal of these stereotypes is one part of a successful attempt to disorient the audience through a wider semantic redefinition of many elements both of the *commedia all'italiana*, within which model Scola had always moved, and of costume dramas.

It has been common to see the shared sadness of Gabriele and Antonietta as a story of those willingly or unwillingly excluded from the Fascist consensus: the former is discriminated against by the state; the latter is enslaved by its domestic equivalent, which precedes Fascism but is also inextricably linked to its social and cultural policies towards gender relations.[13] Reviewers were almost unanimous in interpreting their relationship as an encounter of two outcasts (*emarginati*): Ugo Casiraghi, historic critic of the Communist daily *L'Unità*, used this word, noting that this was the story of two parallel 'solitudes', of two people 'defeated' and of 'those who are left behind'[14]; Grazzini, the equally well-known film critic of *Il Corriere della Sera*, the Milan-based daily of the bourgeoisie and Italy's most read, also considers Antonietta and Gabriele 'defeated', and sees in their story 'the roots of today's intolerance against all outcasts'[15]; in a similar vein, Stefano Reggiani in *La Stampa* summarised their condition as 'the encounter of two people who recognise each other as different in opposition to official rhetoric and violence' (Figure 8.1).[16]

There is ample evidence for this interpretation of the co-protagonists. For instance, it is tempting to read the narrative parallels between the climax of the alliance between the two superpowers and the meeting of Gabriele and Antonietta as a deliberate juxtaposition of a conformist society and two marginalised Others. The constant unfolding of the parade on the radio draws a close relationship between the events in the tenement and those unfolding outside it: the Fascist anthem *Giovinezza* opens proceedings just as Gabriele tries to teach Antonietta the rumba ('that is less easy to dance to', he glosses); air force planes shoot past

Figure 8.1 *Una Giornata Particolare* as the 'encounter of two solitudes'

just as Antonietta feels a first rush of attraction to this strangely kind man[17]; cannon shots marking the arrival of the two dictators cause Gabriele to spill coffee beans[18]; Mussolini, and then Hitler, speak as Antonietta and Gabriele's relationship climaxes into mutual and open confessions of their experiences; German marching songs underscore their two moments of intimacy, the rooftop kiss and their intercourse, which climaxes to faraway cheers of 'Duce, Duce' in a dissonant culmination of conformism and resistance. These are just a few examples, as the radio broadcast is nearly incessant and yet sufficiently intermittent in emphasis and volume to suggest the significance of its targeted application.

As public and private interact and clash, Antonietta and Gabriele's experiences further distance them from the majority, creating a gulf between the single, indissoluble, incontrovertible Fascist voice of the masses and the tentative voices of the two individuals left behind; the radio itself proclaims it in style: 'Fascist Italy knows but one voice.' To push the 'outcast' interpretation further, Gabriele, sacked from his job as one of EIAR's mellifluously virile broadcasters, has literally been rendered voiceless by the regime. His marginalisation, then, begins well before his physical removal to Italy's island confines and strikes at the very core of his individuality. It is thus quite easy to read Gabriele, at least, as a victim and as a political, cultural and physical outcast.

Except that there is a problem with this outwardly attractive symbolic analysis of Gabriele's mutism: is the voice he spoke with on EIAR Gabriele's own? Although he clearly enjoyed his job, not only were those words not his but a script, but the voice itself – the rhetoric and dictated virile tones it had to assume – and the medium – the official

voice of a homophobic regime – meant that Gabriele was an agent of his own repression. As when he tried to fabricate a girlfriend to deflect suspicion, when he spoke for EIAR he was attempting to conform to a cultural model that would destroy his own personality. Paradoxically, then, there is a sense of finding his own voice in his silencing, a sense of empowerment in his defeat. Notwithstanding the fact that a renewed awareness may make the defeat even more painful to sustain, that awareness is nevertheless there, a step towards agency and responsibility.

Hence, neat and arguable though it is, there is something missing from the analysis of the film as a synergy of two *emarginati*, which detracts the viewer's attention from part, at least, of the film's significance. Not only is Gabriele's character a more complex one than the victimised Other which that particular analysis reduces him to, but can Antonietta really be considered an outcast in the same way as he is? Or is she not rather more akin to the other residents of the tenement and part of a broader allegorical representation of Italy? Narratively, she is indeed left out, downtrodden, but sociologically, as a character, this is not as clear-cut. Politically, she fits happily within the majority, embracing particularly the cult of Mussolini that was so pervasive among Italian men and women alike[19]; socially, she embraces her role as home-maker and womb of the Empire, bearing its future soldiers; culturally, she is a *Minculpop* (Ministry of Popular Culture) dream, a litany of popular songs and glossy magazines left on repeat.

Antonietta does not stay at home on 6 May 1938 because she disagrees with the Fascists or their alliance with Hitler, or because, as one well-dressed and sarcastic neighbour puts it, she has 'no brain for these things'; she would have liked to go, but is just too busy with housework, six children, a husband and his single salary as 'manager of concierge services' at the Ministry of East Africa, which certainly does not allow her the luxury of a maid. At home, Antonietta arranges buttons into the Duce's profile and collects his pictures and sayings into a scrapbook that superbly summarises the cult of Mussolini, combining elements of modern celebrity culture, sexual fetishism, classical mythology, totalitarian ideology and religious fervour. Antonietta knows the names of her hero's steeds, admires his superhuman qualities, unquestioningly believes in him and faints at his sight like those struck by a religious vision. Her fantasy of virgin conception at one keen glance from a galloping Mussolini, in a public park, is an inspirational explanation of how all the elements just mentioned cohabited in the cultural milieu of the time. One of the aphorisms in Antonietta's scrapbook reads: 'Irreconcilable with feminine psychology and physiology, genius can only be

male'; 'and do you agree?', asks Gabriele; 'of course I agree, why do you ask?', she answers, in a moment of simplicity and insight which reveals that agreement is a foreign concept to Antonietta.

How exactly is Antonietta an outcast, then? Her existence is atrocious, certainly: although she is not beaten, not abused in a narrow sense, she lives in a relationship with a man and a family who despise her or ignore her, she works hard for no reward and endures a sexual life that can only be described as routine, institutionalised rape. Yet, rather than a story of Fascist social marginalisation, Antonietta's 1977 story is one of contemporary, feminist 'consciousness raising'[20]: she discovers that her condition, though normal – as in not unrepresentative and socially sanctioned – enslaves her and deprives her of any real agency. She reclaims this agency when she seduces Gabriele and when she temporarily resists her husband's daily advances, but it is a bitter and short-lived realisation that will not, or at least not yet, change her condition, but only reveal its boundaries to her. Although there is something disappointingly clichéd about a male director using sex as a symbol of a woman's agency, this choice can be explained in part by Antonietta's emotional background and her experience of men, which arguably limit how she can show affection. Albeit written by an all-male scriptwriting team, *Una Giornata Particolare* has a more subtle understanding of the issues feminists were raising in those years than some of the outwardly more radical and anti-bourgeois works of the 1970s, which often marginalised women's voices both narratively and politically.

In respect to feminism, too, the reviewers' favourite equation of Gabriele's and Antonietta's conditions is not wholly convincing and risks undermining the strength of Scola's historical message and of its applicability to the present. The 'two outcasts' line of analysis does not recognise that the film is a 'special day' for Antonietta and Gabriele but a 'normal day' for the politics of a nation overwhelmingly behind its anti-democratic institutions and their heinous decisions in domestic and foreign policy alike. Instead, the film's contemporaries made *Una Giornata Particolare* into a film about individuals. They captured Scola's sensitivity in liberating Gabriele's and Antonietta's individuality from the Fascist attempt to deny it,[21] but overlooked the force of Scola's historical and allegorical analysis of Fascist and contemporary Italy. The film is about intimacy, but it does not reduce history to the story of a man and a woman; rather, it places them within it, rediscovering a relationship between fictional story-telling and reality that had seldom been grasped in Italy since the neorealist period.[22]

Proof that *Una Giornata Particolare* is primarily about Italy and only secondarily about Gabriele and Antonietta is in the fact that the film has three main characters, not two. The uniformed crowd that we left at the gate, revelling in the myopic certainty of its own unchallenged swagger, is the film's third character. It is a chorus, of course, but one so cumbersome that it works to all extents and purposes as a co-protagonist. The crowd leaves early in the day, but its presence is a constant that never abandons the story of Antonietta and Gabriele and at key points interacts directly with them. First, the tenants never leave the scene completely because, as already mentioned, their voice remains present through the radio which plays the sounds of the parade and comments on its unfolding. Given the representation of this multitude as a single unit both uncompromising and yet ideologically ambiguous – with no room and no concern for distinctions between its fanatical, voluntary, coerced and unthinking members – one should understand the cheering radio crowds and the building's residents as one and the same.

Second, this chorus has an extraordinary coryphaeus in the building's caretaker, who throughout the day gives them voice, represents them politically and provides the absent residents with the physical means to intervene in Antonietta and Gabriele's relationship: the caretaker turns on the radio and cranks up the volume; she guards the building and spies on those left there; she calls on Antonietta twice, to let her know that she knows Gabriele is there, to warn her about him, to reminder her subtly but unequivocally of the expectations that come with her allegiance to the majority. The caretaker represents a concept of society based on conformism, clientelism, acquiescence towards power and arrogance towards weakness, enforced through a deadly mixture of knowledge, insinuation and silence. The caretaker, at the gate or knocking at Antonietta's door but never entering her flat, resembles closely the Italy thriving outside the tenement, threatening to reveal its secrets and promising to invade this intimate space as soon as the day is over. The caretaker is thus the ideal mouthpiece of the crowd she saluted with outstretched arm, whose monotonous and perfectly tuned song will soon accompany her again through the inescapable soundtrack of the parade's live radio broadcast.

Third, the tenants eventually return, exhausted but satisfied, full of stories of their day. Antonietta's husband, her four sons and two daughters, and all their neighbours, make it home with sore heels and talk of the nation they felt part of, of the power they deluded themselves of partaking in. Then the present once again intrudes in the historical film,

as Antonietta's husband looks forward to looking back: 'a fateful day,' he proclaims at the dinner table, 'one day, in twenty or thirty years' time, you will be able to say: I was there too.' Yet, for all the pomp, they are also full of petty concerns: which of them had the best view? Which corps is the smartest? Which country has most guns? How did young Fabio's cheek get stained with ink from his homemade pompon? What's for dinner? Crucially, then, nothing has changed; not a doubt, not a shiver at the aggressive militarism or the dreams of grandeur. There is no respite for the viewer hoping for a sign of catharsis; when Antonietta opens Gabriele's copy of *The Three Musketeers* or when she says 'no, not today' to her husband, she will not tonight 'work on the seventh' child that will bring them the much vaunted natality bonus. These are illusions destined to remain moments that hold no hope of salvation for either Gabriele or Antonietta, now, yes, feeling Other, at the ordinary ending of this special day.

Fourth, the crowd (Italy) is central to this film because we know so little of the individuals who compose it and thus cannot retreat into those most common defence mechanisms of all Italian memories of the Fascist period: exception and justification. Interestingly, when Scola, in later films such as *La Famiglia* (*The Family*, 1987) or *Concorrenza Sleale*, decided to focus more closely on some of these average Italians, his analysis lost some of its edge. There he fell back on slimy and lazy Fascists – Giulio and uncle Nicola in the 1987 film; the brother-in-law and Matilde in the 2001 one – and cowardly but fundamentally good Italians. In *Concorrenza Sleale*, he also exonerated the children, as he had not done in 1977 or, arguably, in 1987.[23] Thus, paradoxically, the blurry and univocal representation of the tenants in *Una Giornata Particolare* is just what makes them both central to the film and particularly significant in the wider context of Italy's representation of its Fascist past.

In *Una Giornata Particolare*, regardless of what will come in his later works, Scola offers neither exception nor justification. There is no exception, because, if all Romans took part, seemingly embracing Fascism in 1938, just as popular memory and much historiography have told us that Italians deserted it,[24] at the onset of its most aggressive and most tragic phase, then with whom can the viewer identify to seek reassurance? Where is the Resistance? Not in the three individuals who remained home: the caretaker is perhaps the worst of them all; Antonietta wanted to attend, and in the end will meekly endure her fate even now that she knows an alternative; even Gabriele, an enemy and a victim of Fascism, states that 'I have nothing against Fascism; it is

Fascism that has something against me.' And, as there is no exception, so there is no justification. Precisely because everybody is a Fascist, any psychological motivation becomes redundant: the baddies, such as they are, are neither disturbed nor repulsive but just ordinary.

The absolute normality and scale of popular support for Fascism's darkest hour set *Una Giornata Particolare* apart from most Italian films about the period because it shifted Fascism from the background to the centre, as Zinni has argued.[25] It showed an Italy enthralled by Fascism, neither spellbound nor terrorised but convinced by the promise of easy times and the glory of imperialistic ventures. The film also made no difference between public and private spheres, highlighting the results of 15 years of totalitarianism, perhaps, but also speaking to a contemporary concern. Present influences aside, however, the film's merging of public and private life further dismantled the separation between government and society on which much Italian memory of Fascism is built.

Furthermore, and arguably more significantly still, Scola showed Italy in this light in 1938, after the atrocities in East Africa, in the midst of the mission to aid General Franco in Spain, during the media campaign that preceded the Racial Manifesto and anti-Semitic legislation to be issued that Autumn: thus, the traditional defence of the *italiani brava gente* narrative, casting Italians as peacetime pseudo-Fascists, is removed. Perhaps because Scola himself was an eight-year-old Son of the She-Wolf lining Via dei Fori Imperiali on 6 May 1938, he was able to represent those crowds with utter honesty, with neither indictment nor apology but as a simple statement of fact, a childhood memory untouched by adult considerations of convenience or propriety. The racist comic books about Italian deeds against the savages of its African empire, just like the gentle shots of Antonietta's children around the dinner table recalling their day off school, attest to Scola's ability to empathise without excusing.

This kind of introspection is more akin to the efforts of other European nations that, as discussed in the previous chapter, often engaged in the 1970s in a thorough and at times self-flagellating analysis. *Una Giornata Particolare* does not have the aggressiveness of some European and Italian counterparts – its Fascists are neither Louis Malle's torturers nor Bertolucci's sadists nor Visconti's paedophiles nor Schlöndorff's middle-class Nazis – but the way in which it describes the normality and pervasiveness of Fascism has a quality of subtle and uncompromising revelation that plays a different (but no less significant) role, in terms of the audience's relationship with the past, from that taken on by the shocking symbolism of other films, both in Europe and in Italy.

Part of *Una Giornata Particolare*'s strength is in its refusal of ideological certainties that were prevalent in Italian films about Fascism, and especially in post-1968 films. In relation to the films of this period, analysed in Chapter 7, Scola does not dismiss the twin fascinations with class and Freudian psychology so central to the period's revision of the nation's past, but he tones them down and traces them back to the centrality and complexity of individuals and their social interactions. Obviously such a work – filmed by a left-wing filmmaker, centred around the encounter between a sophisticated middle-class gay man and a sexually frustrated working-class housewife who adores Mussolini – will hardly elude considerations about class, gender and sexuality, yet Scola carefully avoids the temptation of classifying these as drivers of all human behaviour in the way that Bertolucci did, perhaps too often.

Thus, the working class is stripped of its mystique: gone are Bertolucci's knotted sons of the soil and their leathery hands, fierce yet gentle, and gone are the proletarian certainties of their comrades, sometimes veined with an almost supernatural power of interpretation and hindsight. Not only are Scola's workers as Fascist as the next person, as nationalistic and as gullible – if not more so – but the film refuses to consider their economic status as a determining factor, thus ignoring, if not quite undermining, the Communist analysis of the relationship between Fascism and capitalism. It is certainly arguable that, most notably through Antonietta's character, *Una Giornata Particolare* recognises lack of education as a socio-cultural issue that directly influences a person's likelihood of following the populist rhetoric and policies of the regime, and that in so doing the film can qualify working-class support for Mussolini as naïve rather than evil. Nevertheless, it is also true that, unlike in many other films made since 1945, the ignorance of the poor is not offset here by an innate wisdom drawn from their sweaty intimacy with the means of production, be these earth, as in the case of the Dalcò dynasty in *Novecento*, or steel, as in the cases of the factory workers and farriers in Lizzani's *Achtung! Banditi* and *Cronache di Poveri Amanti* (to name just a couple of examples from many neorealist proletarians).

In a similar manner, Scola's middle classes retain some of the binary of elegance and decadence that had become their trademark in much Italian and European cinema, but in a form that is decidedly moderated, both aesthetically and politically. Given that the building's residents are an amorphous social mass, the professional, educated, curious, soft-spoken and smooth Gabriele remains the only middle-class counterpoint to Antonietta's family's popular background. However, Gabriele skilfully evades both the middle-class categories popular in the period:

he does not conform to the stereotype of the anti-Fascist intellectual, because he is seemingly uninterested in politics and even refuses the label of anti-Fascist; but he also does not fit the stereotype of a petty, selfish and greedy man in the mould of many 1970s bourgeois, charged with selling out Italian democracy to Fascist violence in return for the law and order necessary to protect their own privileges. Unlike one of Rosi's middle-class intellectuals, especially the two Levis – Carlo in *Cristo Si é Fermato a Eboli* and Primo in *La Tregua* (*The Truce*, 1997) – Gabriele may possess education but he has no real power of analysis, and, unlike a member of Bertolucci's guilty and neurotic bourgeoisie, especially the hedonistic Ottavio Berlinghieri in *Novecento*, he may be elegant and suave but he is in no way decadent.

Where sexuality had been Bertolucci's symbol of choice to describe middle-class self-indulgence, its guilt complexes and its sick relationship with property, Scola refuses any connection between Gabriele's homosexuality, his class and his politics. Psychology and sex persist as themes, but they are no longer props, no longer justifications for political decisions or ideological belonging and pseudo-belonging. It is evident as early as 15 minutes into the film, during Gabriele's phone conversation with his partner, that he does not live his homosexuality either as a shameful guilt to be hidden, as Clerici does in *Il Conformista*, or as an ostentatious anti-conformism, as Ottavio Berlinghieri does, but as an integral and normal part of his personality that would have no bearing on his relationship with society if society did not sanction it as illegal.

Similarly, Antonietta's attraction towards Gabriele is, in the final analysis, a healthy one: the natural expression – from her point of view anyway – of an emotional affinity. If this were someone else's film – Liliana Cavani's? – Antonietta might well have seduced Gabriele only to denounce him to the authorities as a pervert. In spite of the potential for patronising banality inherent in having a gay man seduced by a woman, there is a refreshing simplicity in the fact that Antonietta is making love to Gabriele and definitely not to Mussolini, or her father, or some other figure buried deep in her subconscious. Scola's film may not master the visionary and provocative symbolism of other 1970s works, but possesses an understated realism which allows a clear analysis of Italy's society under Fascism. And that deserves, perhaps, more scholarly attention than it has thus far received.

Although the word 'awkward' may have rendered better than 'special' the subtleties of the Italian title, *Una Giornata Particolare* is indeed pretty special: its analysis of Italianness refuses the *brava gente* narrative but also the alternative, class-based readings of Italy between 1922 and

1945, which mostly allowed in through the back door the generalised exoneration of Italians they had just defenestrated. Aesthetically, the film's much celebrated washed-out colour gives the opposite effect to the golden and sepia filters of many retro 'heritage films',[26] filled with nostalgic undertones. Carrying neither the romanticism of colour nor the promise of symbolic sophistication of black and white photography, this cinematography provides the perfect chromatic range to wrap around these shabby, lonely lives and the doomed gregarious ecstasy of those around them.

Only a year after *Novecento*, the context in which *Una Giornata Particolare* was filmed was quite different: no longer the 1976 expectation of the PCI's regional and national electoral exploits, but the hopelessness and increased violence of 1977, the year in which a new wave of unrest gripped Italian factories and universities and the Red Brigades escalated their murderous strategy. Antonietta's false dawn and Gabriele's defeat within Fascist society's triumph reflect the disillusionment of the 'years of lead', but also the apogee of Fascist power in 1938, long and tragic years away from the regime's demise. Past and present superbly interact here, not through tired or straightforward allegories so much as through a keen glance at the relationship between politics, popular culture and people, which lingers on as one of many long-standing questions around the concept of citizenship in Italy.

But there is a further dimension to *Una Giornata Particolare*'s disillusionment, because a film that could have signalled a new kind of introspection in Italian cinema's and Italian audiences' analysis of the Fascist past actually represented the last hurrah of a specific idea of history as both collective and intimate. In the 1980s, the analysis of the individual's place in history, which characterised both Scola's film and much of the 1970s' *engagé* filmmaking, would give way to an individualistic analysis of history that could only induce a simplistic, one-sided and ultimately misleading revision of the dominant historical memories of Fascist Italy. A subtle but paramount difference exists, in fact, between Gabriele and Antonietta's stories, intimate but contextualised politically and historically, and the decontextualised, neoliberal narratives that would go on to dominate the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s.

Part V
Recurrences

9

Black Shirts, Hearts of Gold: Recurrent Memories

The 1980s spelt both the demise of Fascism as a popular cinematic theme and the beginning of the revisionist trend, long before Berlusconi's rise to power.[1] Bettino Craxi's government marked the union of the PSI's neoliberal cultural shift and the DC's traditional anti-Communist rhetoric. This set the stage for a revision of the civic religion of the Resistance that would later be picked up by Berlusconi, rebranded and packaged in an even glossier TV pulp than Craxi's 'court of dwarves and showgirls'.[2] The neoliberal right's emergence was compounded by the slow agony of the PCI.[3] The survival of Italy's democracy in the 1970s – not at all a foregone conclusion – bore a hefty price for the Communists. The party compromised with the DC not along the virtuous if slightly utopian lines imagined by Moro and Berlinguer, but rather along the supremely pragmatic and often shady ones of Giulio Andreotti, who led the National Unity governments between 1976 and 1979 with external PCI support.[4] By 1983, after four years of brutal fighting with the Red Brigades, more unclaimed right-wing massacres, trials, appeals, convictions handed down and overturned, mysteries and draconian Special Laws against terrorism, the BR were defeated, the student movement spent and the workers' movement humiliated by the 1980 white-collar counter-strike at car manufacturer Fiat in Turin. The PCI was back in permanent opposition, orphaned of any vision for the country beyond the noble ideal of the supremacy of democracy, even such an anomalous and deeply flawed one as Italy's. The PCI's Catholic interlocutor Moro had been murdered by the BR in 1978 after a dramatic six-week kidnapping; Berlinguer, the other half of the failed compromise, passed away suddenly in 1984, during a stump speech in Padua, and with him passed 'the last great Western Communist', as Ginsborg has written movingly.[5]

As Italy moved towards a post-industrial society in the 1980s, the collective, class-based readings of history that had dominated postwar memories of the Fascist period and of the anti-Fascist struggle gave way increasingly to new voices and ideas. These were seldom deliberate neo-fascist attempts to rewrite history so as to rehabilitate Fascism. There were some such efforts, perhaps: Zinni identifies Pasquale Squitieri's *Claretta* (1984), the dubious bio-pic of Mussolini's most famous lover, as the forerunner of an unapologetically right-wing counter-memory.[6] But for the most part this revisionism displayed subtler trends: distrust of 'History' and its forces; cynical suspicion towards politics and ideology; supremacy of the individual, not within history but as a rejection of it. The underlying message here was the emergence of freedom of choice as perhaps the only inalienable human right.

Choice and the individual had always played a part in Italy's representation of Fascism, as they had in European narratives of the long Second World War. We have already encountered choice treated as the inevitable conclusion of the righteous, in neorealist films of all persuasion, and as the mark that branded cowards and/or their redemption, in the 1960s revival. In the left-wing films of the 1970s, we have seen choice as a primarily political dilemma and as a uniquely psychological, intimate one. The 1970s films pitched the individual as an intrinsically political battleground, abolishing the separation of the public and personal spheres along the lines of neo-Marxist and feminist theory. Before then, in neorealist and post-neorealist cinematic discourses, individuals had mattered mostly as part of a group, as agents or victims of history: their importance derived from this broader role, regardless of which one it was, and their only other option – individualism – spelt an inevitable moral and physical doom.

The 1980s reversed, in Italy and elsewhere, the 1970s ideological lynchpin that 'the personal is political': now the political was personal.[7] Where the violent and visionary 1970s had merged the two spheres, the wealthy and decadent 1980s sanctioned the victory of one over the other. The revision of the memories of Italy's Fascist period has been based, ultimately, on this kind of individualistic analysis of both present and past, launched in the 1980s and triumphant in the new millennium, when the supremacy of the personal over the political became the cornerstone of the Berlusconian revisionist films analysed in Chapter 2.

Nevertheless, even more orthodox historical films in the last three decades have reflected the same disillusionment with all ideological frameworks, which left room only for an individualistic reinterpretation of history. In response to a memory dominated by the civic religion

of the Resistance and the ideals of commitment and community – in either their Communist or Catholic interpretation – filmmakers started to dwell on stories of unprepared commitment, as in the cases of *I Piccoli Maestri* (*Little Teachers*, Daniele Luchetti, 1998) and *Il Partigiano Johnny* (*Johnny the Partisan*, Guido Chiesa, 2000), and on selfishness as a cross-party political category, as in *Sanguepazzo* (*Wild Blood*, Marco Tullio Giordana, 2008) and RAI's 2011 remake of *Il Generale della Rovere* (*General della Rovere*, Carlo Carlei, 2011). Even an anti-conformist and provocative film like Marco Bellocchio's *Vincere* (2009) reduces history to a matter of individuals: formalist to the bitter end, Bellocchio would like to tell the story of Mussolini's first wife, Ida Dalser, but he fails to find her voice, transforming the whole saga into a melodramatic hodgepodge of sexual tension and fate, most notably retaining a puzzling sense of political predestination in the representation of Mussolini.

Thus, contemporary revisionism is not easily defined: it is only seldom neofascist and it is, above all, cautiously selective. This chapter and the next revisit the common denominators that have defined Italy's memories of itself under Mussolini's rule and thus also its cinematic self-image. First, this chapter analyses what has remained constant throughout the postwar period and across films that seemingly espouse opposing political interpretations of Fascism; then, Chapter 10 will interrogate the equally constant absences that weigh down Italy's historical filmmaking. In highlighting and probing them, the two chapters will not argue that these trends have never been the object of subtle variations or even open and sometimes brutal challenges, but rather that these common denominators have remained consistently part of the dominant memory, regardless of those challenges.

As with the plaques and monuments dotted throughout Italy to commemorate the bravery and martyrdom of Italy's partisans, filmic memory of the war has its texture, its rhetoric and its editing. Its constituent component is the centrality of the Resistance and its prose is the generic goodness of Italians. Above all, a focus on national identity, rather than on history, politics or ideology, unites the films of the four periods that this book has described: Resistance, Reconstruction, Revolution and Revisionism. In other words, in the interpretation of most filmmakers since 1945, representing Fascism has meant making an attempt to understand and represent the social and cultural identity of Italians rather than – or at least as well as – the specific regime that ruled the peninsula from 1922 to 1943. For some, like the neorealists and perhaps especially Rossellini, this was the result of the traumatic experiences of the German occupation and of the Resistance as a war

of liberation, which led them to make films that would inspire Italians to embrace the best aspects of their collective identity, carefully synthesised. For others, like Zampa and Brancati, it was a moralistic and bitter look at the worst aspects of that same, imagined, national identity, which they inextricably linked to the success of Mussolini's regime and the resulting tragedy of Italy's war. For some comic filmmakers of the early 1960s and for their audiences, privileging discourses of national character over historical analysis was a way to manufacture some sort of cathartic closure, while for the political *auteurs* of the 1970s it was the way to reject that closure, pointing the finger at the imperfect democracy that replaced dictatorship. Virtues or vices, critique or cradle to lull bruised egos, Italian historical films about Fascism have seldom been able to eschew a simplistic and stereotyped analysis of the Italian people.

The heading of *italiani brava gente* neatly sums up the characteristics the nation took in the dominant memory of the Fascist past that has populated the country's cinemas. We have so far encountered the narrative of quintessential Italian decency as a morally good whole, as decent persons sinking in a corrupting society and as a just social class, but the story of the *brava gente* myth goes further than cinema, to the core of Italy's political and cultural redemption following World War Two. It was not only the emotional reaction of a people seeking redemption, but also a deliberate political, diplomatic and cultural device employed to negotiate a dramatic postwar period that carried extreme uncertainties for the future.[8]

This is a well-worn and much-loved view, which Fogu effectively summarises as a 'banality of goodness that had prevented [Italians] from perpetrating inhuman or criminal acts',[9] and which Pierluigi Battista describes as

> a self-consolatory myth; an image of itself that a democratic postwar Italy, inoculated from jingoism by its overdose under the previous regime, has enjoyed propagating through politics, fashion, cooking and behavioural patterns. *Italiani 'brava gente'*, they said, was a shield made out of bonhomie and joviality; it was a natural inclination to meekness and informal conviviality, which should have spared us from bloody conflict, [acting as] a buffer against the dramatic impact of history and cruelty.[10]

As Del Boca has ably traced, the origins of this myth dwell in a historical perception of Italian national character that was not positive but indeed quite negative, among both travelling foreigners and Italy's own elites.[11]

We could thus realistically attempt this rendition of the *brava gente* narrative in relation to what Bosworth has called 'the Italian dictatorship'[12]: Italians have always been selfish, lazy, indifferent to politics, conformist to the point of cowardice; they were well suited to accepting the rule of a basically paternalistic dictatorship whose totalitarian ambitions were subordinated, arguably deliberately, to a pragmatic cultivation of consensus which in many ways allowed Italy's familistic survivalism to continue unaltered. Slow to anger – the story continues – Italians finally reacted as Mussolini's regime turned inwardly and outwardly aggressive by sanctioning the alliance with Germany, issuing the Racial Laws and declaring war on France and Britain in 1940. Unaccustomed to any sense of civic responsibility, the population was nevertheless steeped in communitarian values fostered by Latin solidarity, an atavistic parochialism and deeply felt Christian values, and thus reacted against the senseless bloodshed.[13]

It is a testament to the political importance of this self-portrait that so much of the censorship that plagued neorealist films after the 1949 Andreotti Law was aimed not at forbidding the freedom of speech and analysis of political opponents, as the PCI undoubtedly read it at the time, but rather at preventing any negative image of Italians reaching foreign screens. As we have seen in Chapter 4 with specific reference to Zampa's films, that was the fate of many neorealist films, and not only of those that displayed Italy's appalling postwar conditions but also of the few historical films of that period that displayed Fascist Italy in anything other than the accepted, post-armistice narrative of German victimisation: thus, another one of Gianni De Tommasi's zealous and officious notes, this time on a small strip of paper stapled to the domestic censorship visa for Lizzani's *Cronache di Poveri Amanti*, read: 'One otherwise reminds [the ministry] of the necessity that films such as this one ought not be released overseas.'[14]

What did make it across the border was so successful that it not only established the long-lasting fame of Italian cinema but also helped construct an irresistible imaginary of lovable Italians, adopting now the persona of a folksy and melodramatic Italian woman, voluptuous yet mothering, now that of a good, life-loving Italian man, unconsciously brave, who embraces vice but succumbs to virtue. It is hard to deny the pervasiveness or the longevity of these images, which have been adopted with such conviction outside Italy that they continue to inform foreign representations of World War Two Italians as much as they do Italian films on the topic. The most notable example is the inane romanticism of John Madden's *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* (2001), an elegantly

vulgar, mandolin-playing, opera-singing, wine-loving and war-loathing invader of Greek soil.

Corelli's clichés are some of the tritest signs of the *italiani brava gente* narrative, but, as with all stereotypes, their longevity and persuasiveness deserve more attention than their banality might suggest at first. In particular, it is worth considering where these characteristics came from and how they emerged as the perceived shared identity of a nation. Breaking down the concept of *italiani brava gente* will not only help clarify a label that is relevant and useful but often shrouded in assumptions, but also differentiate it from similar stereotypes applied to other nations. Is it not the case, in fact, that many national narratives follow similar patterns and seek a similarly uplifting objective, also sharing key aspects of Italy's narrative, like the ability to come together in crisis, for instance? Is the traditional representation of the French not as life-affirming as that of Italians? Are the British stereotypes of unflappability, restraint and self-deprecation – while superficially opposite to Italian ones – not also means by which a similar inherent national decency is constructed? Indeed, this latter example was seized upon in two 1960s war films, *I Due Colonnelli* and *I Due Nemici* (*The Best of Enemies*, Guy Hamilton, 1961), both of which celebrate and exploit for comic effect a shared common sense marked by diametrically opposed behaviours (and, of course, contrasted in turn with the innate evil of the Germans). So, if the innate morality of the French somewhat paradoxically coexists with the stereotype of their penchant for indecency, matching the country's historic cultural sophistication and its equally historic attachment to land and landscape, and if British collective decency is closely linked to the legacies of Protestant self-determination, class structure and the rule of law, where does Italy's alleged moral compass stem from?

There are five cornerstones to the *italiani brava gente* myth: Catholicism; the humanist tradition; the distrust of rules and rulers; the peasant tradition; and familistic individualism. These pivotal elements coexist, complement each other, often overlap and equally often clash in ways that can nevertheless be reconciled as the contradictions and imperfections that sanction the complexity of all identities, imagined or otherwise. Hence, if the image of innate Italian goodness inevitably derives from the country's role as the historic home of Catholicism and the Papacy, it is not the result of a passive or straightforward religious affiliation. Rather, it is often represented as a morality based on a deeper religiosity that embraces Roman *pietas* and pagan legacies of superstition and intimacy with gods, demigods and saints, for example, even when these customs place it at odds with the Church establishment.

The tension inherent in that relationship is at times exacerbated by the cohabitation of its Catholic morality with a secular humanitarianism that has its own set of values. But, if humanism and Catholicism sometimes suffer from their respective allegiances to reason and dogma, within the *brava gente* narrative they more often manage to coexist, bestowing upon their interpreters not hypocrisy but rather a double, more complex and more genuine ethical drive. The moral directions that supposedly stem from devotion to the monotheistic deity and the Decalogue are made to match those of the humanist tradition. Hence, Italians can reconcile their allegiance to the Church with the intellectual curiosity and cultural diversity of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment and, most importantly, with a modern interpretation of Italian piety informed by the often anti-clerical nationalism of the Risorgimento and, for many, by the later strength of Marxism.

The *brava gente* stereotype thus often realises the historic compromise of Christian solidarity and social-democratic welfare imagined by Berlinguer in the 1970s. This relationship has been best summarised by Giovanni Guareschi's comment on town-planning in the Romagna:

> In Romagna, when a new town is built, first they raise a monument to Garibaldi, then they build a church because where's the fun in requesting a civil funeral service if there is no priest to annoy? The whole point is to annoy the priest.[15]

These traditions, both integral parts of the dominant narrative of national identity, celebrate an anti-clerical Catholicism that points to another cornerstone of the *brava gente* myth: the suspicion of rules and rulers. This is an element of the Italian stereotype that most readers will be familiar with [insert your Italian anecdote here]; it is largely explained by a history of foreign domination, local clientelism and the messy first decades of united Italy, when the Piedmontese government was unable to create a civic association between its new citizens, especially in the South, and the state, appearing instead as another oppressive and foreign intruder.[16] This further fostered a mistrust of all things official, especially among the peasantry, who, in Italy as elsewhere, had long learnt to be concerned by politics and change. Best then to focus on oneself and one's family, in obsequiousness to a tendency observed by the sociologist Edward Banfield as familism.[17]

How, then, can selfishness and familism – the former's extended, tribal manifestation – be reconciled with the idea of the inherent decency of Italians, with their Christian and humanitarian principles, with *timor*

dei, solidarity and empathy? More importantly still, how can familism be, alongside the principles just cited, one of the cornerstones of the *italiani brava gente* narrative? The answer is twofold and ultimately central to the interface between this national stereotype and the memory and representation of Fascism in postwar Italy: first, the *brava gente* myth reverses the negative aspects of Italian selfishness by casting Italians as a downtrodden people, who have had to learn to manage by themselves (the art of *arrangiarsi* so brilliantly caricatured by Zampa and Brancati in 1954) over centuries of struggle for survival; and, second, the myth creates a permanent separation between Italians and their government, whatever its colour. Like many stereotypes, this separation is partly a liberal and simplistic interpretation of an historical legacy, but, in the case of Italy, it has also proved a superbly convenient political and cultural expedient. In Italy's analysis of its past the skill of finding shortcuts becomes itself a shortcut to collective innocence. Thus, the average Italian, already endowed with the necessary moral compass by atavistic piety, salt-of-the-earth roots and enlightened ideals, found in the equally innate primacy of family over state the natural antibodies to resist nationalism and totalitarianism.

The collective persona that emerges from this specific set of selected national characteristics is one that skilfully reconciles contradictory tropes not only to create a coherent and irresistible narrative but also to reverse negative traits into positive ones. The *brava gente* are people who possess an innate common sense born out of a supreme survival instinct; people who, in spite of said instinct, cannot help but show solidarity to others; people who have a keen sense of justice, though not of legality; people who fear death and therefore value human life, especially their own; and people who abhor violence, especially against themselves. Consequent traits, such as the poor soldiery and cowardice so often used to comic effect in Italian and foreign war films, are not negative but positive because their chief result – the safeguarding of human life – is a good one: being a reluctant soldier in the face of Fascist militarism, or having no concept of civic responsibility in the context of a totalitarian state, become acts of resistance, or at least of redemption, regardless of whether their motivation is anti-Fascism or self-preservation.

Evidence of these processes, of the *brava gente* myth as an overall narrative, of its individual components and of its political uses, is interspersed right across the history of Italian filmmaking about Fascism since 1945. Selected, convenient clichés of national identity translate into practical narrative and symbolic tropes, forming a number of

common denominators that link *Roma Città Aperta* and *Il Cuore nel Pozzo*, even as one's fibres rebel at the thought of associating the two grammatically, let alone politically! These consistent tropes inform the kind of character involved in these narratives, what their actions are and when they take place, ultimately delineating a shared image of Italianness that both proves the virtually uncontrasted dominance of the *brava gente* narrative and perpetuates it, in accordance with film's ambiguous but fundamental role as symptom and catalyst of historical memory.

We can begin the analysis of these constants from a set of preferred characters, identifying in particular children and priests. With Don Pietro and Marcello in *Roma Città Aperta* and Don Bruno and Francesco in *Il Cuore nel Pozzo*, two bonds between a priest and a child symbolically bookend the history of the postwar representations of Italy's war. However, children and priests have understandably played a wider role in a representation generally dominated by the desire to focus on innocence and victimhood, traditionally sharing not just the former symbolic meaning but also the latter.[18] In Italian cinema's traditional penchant for stock characters and metonymy, clergymen often appear as representatives of a section of society, or in this case an aspect of Italian identity. Rossellini in particular favours religious men: not only Don Pietro, but also the Emilian friars in the fifth episode of *Paisà* and the cloistered city priests in *Era Notte a Roma* work both as representatives of an historical and socio-political legacy that is woven into the fabric of Italian life and as symbols of a particular kind of innocence, tinged with sacrifice and implicit bravery, which Rossellini means to apply to Italians as a whole. Their values give them no choice but to help, just as Esperia's nature does not allow her to reject the fugitive Allies. Esperia, whose business thrives on the impersonation of a nun, effectively shares the humble heroism of Rossellini's pious priests, drawn simultaneously from divine doctrine and innate human empathy. That is why Don Pietro and all his later disciples have to be lowly members of the clergy, parish priests, friars and monks, all untainted by power, because only thus they can showcase the synergies of humanist and religious values that inspire the *italiani brava gente* myth and ensure its fortunes.

One without the other will not do, and Rossellini provides examples of this fact. In *Roma Città Aperta* the priest who reads Don Pietro his last rites catches a glance of the fastidious Nazi officer and obligingly hurries the prayer: his religion has no human warmth and is therefore hollow, devoid of moral fibre. In *Era Notte a Roma* Tarcisio, the

Fascist spy, is a disrobed priest: he has human instincts but no faith in a divine set of values, making him easy prey to temptation and altogether evil. As the ecumenical anti-Fascist morality and the political certainties of the immediate postwar period faded away, these imperfect priests became more common, but the character of the martyr priest did not altogether disappear. The Christian Democrats' long rule over Italy, with all the inevitable hypocrisy of its capitalist confessionalism, the strength and anti-clericalism of the Communist opposition and the decline of practising Catholicism since the 1960s inevitably altered the political and symbolic meanings of these cinematic wartime priests. Thus, Lizzani's elegant and pragmatic Vatican officials in *L'Oro di Roma* – or, for that matter, the blind and obtuse Roman Rabbi in the same film – and the black robes of Bertolucci's Fascist clergymen in *Novecento* form a significant and critical counterpoint, in the 1960s and 1970s, to the heroes, wise men and martyrs who preceded and followed them.

More univocal is the use of children in many historical films about Fascism and the war, whether or not they act also as a priest's flock. From Romoletto's gang in *Roma Città Aperta* onward, Italian children became in these cinematic retellings of the past a stalwart of innocence and courage and a central link to the relationship between past and present, between history and memory, that these films sought to broker. Romoletto, Marcello and the other boys – there is one girl in the gang but she is not allowed to handle bombs – remain unique in this history: children who had grown up fast without losing the prerogatives of childhood; they were terrifyingly real people and yet purely symbolic characters. Scarred physically and psychologically by the war's traumas, they had nevertheless retained innocence and learnt resilience. Hence, these children walking off into the distance with the cheeky piety of Marcello or the angry, vengeful sense of justice of Romoletto, both under the caring shadow of Rome's Catholic and popular hearts, acted as a symbol simultaneously of a defeated nation and of a resistant people in control of their moral compass and in charge of their future.

As Italy's postwar history developed, the overall trends we have witnessed in cinema about Fascism, first to depoliticise the films of the war and then to change their focus towards a psychoanalytical and individualist reading of it, meant that these neorealist children were predominantly replaced by peers who retained the characteristics of innocence and victimhood while shedding the scars of their wartime traumas. Less promptly wounded and more easily healed, they also continued to aspire to act symbolically as the embodiment of an entire people, all of it victimised, all of it innocent.

The role of children in films about Italy's war continued to be defined by the relationship they have to their adult counterparts, a relationship that is very different from that played out by their European equivalents. In French, German and Eastern European cinema, children retain their traditional symbolic meaning as innocents but their innocence is an active historical agent, subject to the wear and tear of physical hardship, loss, choice, self-preservation, indoctrination, corruption, guilt. Louis Malle's *Lacombe, Lucien*, Florya in Elem Klimov's *Idi i smotri* (*Come and See*, USSR, 1985), Oskar in Schlöndorff's *Die Blechtrommel*, Lina in Frank Beyer and Jurek Becker's *Jakob, der Lügner*, are just some examples of the complexity with which European cinema has represented children at war. Their innocence can be intact or tainted, but it always has a cost, and it always carries a moral significance not just for the innocent child but also for the adults around him.

While in Europe the child's gaze is often accusatory, qualifying the actions of the adults, in Italian films the child's gaze has no agency and his or her innocence is often transferred osmotically to the adult. The child is thus seldom more than a lens through which the audience can view the action, from a vantage point that may be emotionally painful but is also, reassuringly, morally unambiguous. So, while children like Lucien, Oskar and Lina invite adult introspection, children like Francesco in *Il Cuore nel Pozzo*, Giosuè in *La Vita è Bella* or Pietruccio in *Concorrenza Sleale* ask nothing in return for the collective catharsis they offer.

The latter two cases, so close in time to a key date in Italy's memory of the Fascist period – the 60th anniversary of the 1938 anti-Semitic legislation – are particularly interesting in this context. Both Benigni's and Scola's films, in fact, elevate the child to narrator of their Holocaust stories but simultaneously strip him of any real voice.[19] Benigni does so first by artificially shielding him from any real knowledge and then, through the happy ending and the adult Giosuè's voiceover at the end of the film, by denying the child mourning and sparing him the long-lasting effects of trauma, although Millicent Marcus interprets what I see as Benigni's hypocrisy as a careful, moving and effective balancing act between revealing the truth and protecting innocence and imagination.[20] Scola, instead, promoted the child to the role of narrator at the last moment, during production, and yet simultaneously cut from the script a crucial scene in which Pietruccio witnessed his Jewish best friend Daniele's expulsion from his now Aryan state school.[21] This is narratively inexplicable: why invest the child with voice only to deny him the right to speak? Whatever the reason, the result is to exonerate postwar generations and dilute the film's critique of Fascist Italy, at

which, as we have seen, Scola can be masterful. For example, both in *Una Giornata Particolare* and in *La Famiglia* he focuses on Italian children's racist comic books, as a rare yet explicit reference to Italy's imperial wars in Africa and the ingrained racism of adult Italian society.

Italian filmmakers have sometimes considered the impact of war, violence and totalitarianism on a child, or used children to accuse adults, whether their guardians or their persecutors, yet seldom have they done so in an Italian context. Gillo Pontecorvo's *Kapo*, which in regard to the analysis of a child's experience under a terroristic regime is in many ways groundbreaking, follows a French girl in a Polish lager,[22] and Roberto Faenza's *Jonah che Visse nella Balena* a Dutch boy in a Nazi concentration camp.[23] The most recent example of a more complex analysis of the effects of trauma on the child, Martina in *L'Uomo che Verrà*, is also arguably the best, least manipulative and least artificially cathartic such treatment. But perhaps the most interesting comes from Rossellini himself in the third film of his war trilogy: *Germania Anno Zero*.[24] Edmund, the child protagonist of that film, is in some ways similar to Marcello or Romoletto – as Pasolini's 1955 revisiting of *Roma Città Aperta* noted, who knows what future they will face in the extreme poverty of liberated Rome? – and especially to Pasquale, the Neapolitan *scugnizzo* in *Paisà*. Edmund's doom has an inevitability about it that is more reminiscent of an Aeschylean discourse than of a Biblical one: the *hubris* of the German people creates a guilt that engulfs and corrupts even the innocents. It is a telling contrast that Rossellini clearly did not see in 20 years of Italian dictatorship sufficient elements for an equally collective indictment.

Alongside these paragons of virtue, Italian filmmakers' choice has consistently privileged the slippery concept of the common man. Although who might constitute the average Italian has certainly changed a great deal over the postwar period, there has been a shared ambition to seek a representative character, usually a male. Whether that was the working-class man of many neorealist films speaking to a poor and defeated nation, the comfortable lower-middle-class survivors of the early 1960s, or the educated, bourgeois individuals who populate more recent films, there is evidence that filmmakers have seldom resisted a choice that not only denoted an incorrigibly male-centred approach, but also spoke to their inability to separate the analysis of Italian history from an often cheap interpretation of national identity.

These men embody, or are meant to embody, strengths and weaknesses of the average Italian, but most often they achieve little more than extending to their compatriots a generalised exoneration from any

collusion with Fascism. It is interesting in this regard to follow the trajectory of Ettore Scola, whose average Italian looked quite different in 1977 and in 2001. In *Una Giornata Particolare* he was attending a Fascist rally, his voice was broadcast by Fascist radio, the compression of mass into a single voice reinforcing his representativeness; almost a quarter of a century later, in *Concorrenza Sleale*, Scola himself identified the 'average Italian' in the Milanese tailor Umberto, who now took centre stage and paradoxically lost all of his political potency, emerging as an accidental anti-Semite whose instant catharsis belied both the ambition of being 'average' and the widespread support for Mussolini's regime so devastatingly sketched in the earlier film.

> In the end even in your average Italian there is a noble spot, a burst of conscience which does not translate into heroism but that moves him to action, albeit in a small way, through an act of kindness or affection towards his friend.[25]

I have translated as 'burst of conscience' what Scola describes as a '*soprassalto d'identità*', which may literally be closer to a 'sudden self-awareness'. However, neither translation successfully conveys the crucial concept of identity expressed in Scola's term.[26] This concept is crucial as it suggests that Italian identity could not accommodate racism, intolerance or the toleration of intolerance, and only a momentary loss of identity, a malfunction of that natural moral compass, could explain the anti-Semitic persecution.[27]

But surely Umberto is in excellent company among some of the great characters of half a century of filmmaking about Fascism: he walks with Francesco and Pina, with Montaldo's nameless factory workers, with Bardone, with Innocenzi, Rocchetti and Gavazza, all the way to Perlasca and Ettore, the deserter of *Il Cuore nel Pozzo*. Like the unassuming heroes of the neorealist period, Umberto's final choice is self-effacing, and, like the accidental heroes, the professional survivors and the reluctant anti-Fascists of later years, Umberto's moral core is tempered by fear, tentativeness, ambivalence and indifference. Different interpretations of the average Italian in Mussolini's Italy, all these characters, and many others who have taken their turn to dominate the representation of the past on Italian screens, have to some extent shared Umberto's attempt at ordinariness, but succeeded only in making the exception into the rule.

The average Italian man and his ancillaries – women, children and priests – have functioned as two-way channels transporting contemporary audiences back into history and simultaneously bringing that past

forward, making it current, interpreting it in the light of new concerns. In the context of Italy's memories of the long Second World War, the cinema has more often and more successfully performed the latter role; in spite of constructing main characters designed to represent the nation, films have rarely succeeded in inviting audiences to act out past traumas, preferring rather to shape an acceptable past that invited moral and political reflections, rather than historical ones. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that these 'celluloid Fascists', as Zinni neatly calls them in the title of his book, should live – act or not act, choose or not choose – in carefully selected celluloid episodes of the Fascist *ventennio*.

The clearest trend in this respect is the predominance as narrative setting of the period from 8 September 1943 to 25 April 1945, after the armistice and the marginalisation of Mussolini's regime. It may well be unsurprising, yet the unfaltering constancy with which this particular time has been employed deserves some analysis. Privileging post-armistice narratives reflects the centrality of the German occupation and of the Resistance movement both as wartime experiences and as lynchpins of the collective values that postwar Italy chose to uphold. The brutal German occupation was arguably as close to a collective trauma as Italy came during the period between 1922 and 1945. This is not to say that wartime hardships and anxiety for those at the front had not been dramatic experiences, but the rapid escalation of events following Mussolini's arrest on 25 July 1943, the phony peace of the 45 days, Badoglio's and the King's armistice and their night-time escape, and the Wehrmacht's immediate descent on the peninsula crushed the propaganda and turned the home front into a front at home.[28] Moreover, the spontaneous and organised guerrilla fighting against the Germans and the *repubblichini* emerged as the catharsis of a defeated anti-Fascist movement and as a brutal civil war. It makes perfect sense, in other words, that such extreme and significant experiences would form the backbone of Italy's memories of the war and of its representation.

This may be obvious, but it is not straightforward. The politically charged construction of this past consists not in playing up its experience but rather in downplaying it, by collectivising to the point of elevating it to the status of an all-encompassing memory. In practical terms this has had visible and widespread consequences for Italian films. In the first instance, it has meant paying less attention to those elements that did not fit a unitary collective memory: areas that had never known German occupation; people who chose to continue to fight on the Fascist side; and all those others whose choice was made for them, such as ethnic minorities and Italian soldiers at the frontline in the USSR,

Balkans or Greece, for whom the armistice was a cruel abandonment to a betrayed and vengeful ally.

In the second instance, it meant refusing to consider the final two years of the war in the context of the long Second World War, of all that had happened in Italy since 1922. Thus, the armistice ceased to be a political, diplomatic and military arrangement and became adapted and adopted into a narrative of brand new beginnings and symbolic rebirths. Both of these sites of amnesia, casualties of Italy's dominant memory, uplifting, inclusive and reassuring, will be further analysed in the next chapter, but first it is necessary to consider the outward characteristics of that memory within which those absences are built.

In Italian cinema, and in wider Italian politics and culture, that memory has been further narrowed down to include almost exclusively the 20 months between the armistice and the liberation. That chronological frame has housed differing narratives but has remained a constant preference from 1945 to 2010. At first, between 1945 and the early 1950s, it allowed Italians to present a collective image of themselves as democratic and anti-Fascist by constructing a society of innate anti-Fascists led by brave leaders of unshakeable certainties: men able to instigate a moral catharsis in people not endowed with the same vision. Then, those heroes lost centre stage, though they did not altogether disappear, to make room for the Resistance anti-heroes who populate overwhelmingly the bitter comedies of the early 1960s: men who fought in spite of their survival instincts. Later still, in the more heavily politicised mood of the post-1968 decade of mass mobilisation, the decency of these hesitant men was judged more harshly, while new characters emerged, ambiguous and unscrupulous, who had previously remained rare or in the shadows. And, finally, the more recent revisionist films reinterpreted the period of occupation and Resistance for their own purposes, but also recycled a kind of righteous hero who had long before lost favour.

In spite of this narrative and political evolution, however, focusing on the period between September 1943 and April 1945 allowed Italians not only to tackle a momentous period in the country's history but also to highlight victimhood, resilience and catharsis over aggression, apathy and culpability. This narrative setting provided all the core elements of a cathartic and apologetic retelling of Italian history: tragedy and day-to-day hardship; choice; bravery; an overwhelming anti-German and anti-Fascist popular feeling; and a brutal foreign enemy, the Germans, who functioned as an invaluable counterpoint to Italian goodness. As we have seen, there are very few exceptions to this narrative setting: a handful of pre-1943 wartime narratives set in Africa and even fewer

in Russia; a few family sagas that run through the period; a few films that focus on the build-up to the war following the 1938 Axis pact with Berlin.

Interestingly, most of these, to varying extents, also safeguard the *italiani brava gente* myth by retaining elements of Italian victimhood and German responsibility. It is interesting that in Italian cinema the 1930s should be summed up by the last two years, introducing Nazi Germany as Italy's political master and avoiding any discussion of the years of maximum support for Mussolini's government, basking in imperial ventures, obtaining almost total domestic control and enjoying the divine seal of the Papal Concordat. It is equally telling that the 1920s, on the rare occasions when they are considered at all, in films like *L'Arte di Arrangiarsi*, *La Marcia su Roma*, *Vincere*, and even in critical and perceptive films like *Anni Difficili* or *Novecento*, should be collapsed into the very first years of the decade, those of the Fascist takeover of power. This ensures that, even as Fascist violence is acknowledged independently of foreign influences, support for Fascism is neglected and large chunks, at least, of Italian society continue to come across as a victim. Finally, when pre-1943 theatres of war are approached, the focus falls almost exclusively on El Alamein or on the frozen Russian steppes: snapshots of defeat meant to belie aggression and facilitate sympathy for the individual soldiers involved. Thus, the resulting timeline of the Fascist *ventennio* reads broadly in the following, rather syncopated, way: 1922, violent takeover of power by a Fascist minority tacitly facilitated by cowardly elites; 1938, Mussolini makes the fatal mistake of allying Italy to Germany; 1942, Italian soldiers, mercilessly sent to war by an incompetent regime to serve a contemptuous ally, fight for a cause they do not believe in and either bravely give their lives or cleverly survive; September 1943–April 1945, Italy's catharsis is achieved through a spontaneous popular uprising in the face of victimisation at the hands of the German occupying forces.

Notwithstanding the variations on these themes and the significant exceptions that we have already encountered in the pages of this book, the result of these common denominators is a near-perfect narrative and visual rendition of the political and cultural mythology of the *italiani brava gente*. It depicts Italians as conformist, pusillanimous, sometimes stupid, selfish, social climbers, greedy, chaotic, familistic, but all these characteristics also carry their opposites: agency, bravery, common sense, human warmth, determination, solidarity. Reconciled through the lens of an innate goodness drawn from land, church, culture and history, all these characteristics are trumped by one fundamental constant:

humanity. Italians' imperfections are in this respect not only coherent with the *italiani brava gente* myth but, indeed, essential components thereof. Accordingly, Fascist Italians, too, from the lowly black shirt to the highest ranks, are portrayed as conformist, pusillanimous, stupid, selfish, social climbers, greedy, familistic, victims of coercion. Crucially, they are seldom Fascist. Instead, they are an army of supporting characters, with few complex protagonists (Clerici, Arcovazzi, perhaps a few others) who share all the Italian characteristics but not their positive opposites, presumably forgotten now out of pomposity, now out of trauma, often with comic effects, sometimes with tragic ones.

These are accompanied by and contrasted with an equally all-encompassing German guilt, based on the reversal of all the Italian stereotypes: *hubris* in place of fear of God; discipline in place of chaos; disregard of human life in place of *pietas*. In this respect, too, the sexually ambiguous Nazi demons of *Roma Città Aperta* have set a standard in postwar cinema that might still remain unsurpassed, but certainly not through lack of trying. Whether they play enemies, oppressors, murderers and occupiers, in the familiar way consonant with the privileged post-armistice setting, or allies in foreign wars as in *I Due Colonnelli* and the few other war dramas, or unseen friends and totalitarian paradigms as in *Una Giornata Particolare* and other stories of the late 1930s, the Germans effectively fulfil the same role. For instance, in Benigni's *La Vita è Bella*, when the school teacher praises the Nazi state's eugenic school curriculum – during Dora's engagement party – the film characterises her as stupid, vain and attention-seeking, but the absent Germans as paradigms of inhumanity that even such an admiring idiot cannot hope to emulate. The contrast between Italians and Germans, a crucial part of the overall narrative of Italy's war, is thus not framed primarily by familiar lines of vice and virtue, morality and immorality, good and evil, but along subtly different lines of humanity and inhumanity.

A case in point is the ease with which Negrin replaced Germans with Yugoslavs as the traditional baddies of Italian war films, proving that the Nazis are a moral, rather than a national, counterpart, designed to reinforce the innate decency of Italians, their human wholesomeness that defies their more than occasional lack of decency, integrity, honesty, devotion and righteousness. In this way, all the constituent elements discussed earlier in this chapter fall into place: the innate morality, the immunity to totalitarianism, the familism, all have their translation in choices that most filmmakers have continued to make between 1945 and the present and which audiences have continued to accept, and indeed privilege. The popular success of a mediocre TV drama like

Il Cuore nel Pozzo, perhaps the tritest rendition to date of the good Italian stereotype, is a testament to the ongoing popularity of this fairy-tale national character.

What emerges from these representational trends, from the overarching *brava gente* myth and from its visible symptoms, either individually or collectively considered, is a dominant narrative of Italy's Fascist period centred on concepts of victimhood, humanity and catharsis. Notwithstanding the exceptions already noted, victimhood is undoubtedly the lynchpin of Italy's dominant memory of Fascism since the end of the war. Italians are victims of German sadists and Fascist thugs, of better-equipped Anglo-Americans and of greedy elites, of corrupt bureaucrats and pushy families; they are even, most recently, martyrs at the hands of revolutionary Communist partisans and drooling Yugoslav ogres. Dwelling on collective suffering, while downplaying collective responsibility and celebrating a collective catharsis through the Resistance, or through the hard-fought success of Italy's postwar democracy, has been a successful recipe for redemption. A convenient and extremely successful narrative device for Italian filmmakers and story-tellers, the triptych of humanity–victimhood–catharsis has also had long-term political and emotional consequences: on the one hand, it aided a collective redemption built on democracy and peace; on the other, it brought about a collective exoneration from responsibility and, in time, the grave failure to consider critically a crucial period of the nation's recent past; what is more, a period from which Republican Italy claims to have learnt its most important lessons, drawn its core values and, indeed, earned its very existence. Revisionism, relativism and forgetfulness may yet be the price to pay for the seductiveness of our selective memories.

10
Unexploded Ordnance: Recurrent Amnesias

The coherent paradox of Italian historical memory is that such a crucial episode as Italy's Fascist past is both ubiquitous and only partially retold. In few sites of memory can the symbiotic existence of memory and forgetfulness be more clearly evident. In the 2009 volume he co-edited with Efrat Ben-Ze'ev and Ruth Ginio, Jay Winter borrows Marc Augé's metaphor of a coastline to explain silence as the shallow waters that mediate between the cliffs of remembrance and the inscrutable depths of forgetfulness.[1] In this turquoise frontier, the seabed is tantalisingly close and yet both its depth and its exact topography remain unsure, while the surf inexorably erodes what we know, dredges up forgotten truths and ferries back into forgetfulness what was once remembered. Augé's metaphor is not only an elegant and fortunate image, eminently suitable to the ever-shifting complexities of memory, but it is also applicable to a range of different memories, from the friable limestone cliffs of shaky collective identities to the man-made concrete breakwaters of totalitarian versions of the past. The concept of silence dissects the relationship between remembering and forgetting, with which scholars from many disciplines have long grappled, and serves well the need to distinguish between what is genuinely forgotten and what is deliberately left unsaid.[2]

As the first chapter of this book has surveyed, the relatively recent memories of Europe's long Second World War are both the best example of our modern obsession with memory and a teasing tapestry of silences and subtexts. The Vichy regime and collaborationism in France, Hitler's widespread popularity in Germany, ethnic tensions in Eastern Europe, have all been notable examples, and even the glorious British retelling of the People's War has largely been framed by selective amnesia, for instance around class relations, decolonisation and Britain's broader

loss of global influence. Yet, in most European countries over the seven decades since the conflict, there have been moments when pages that did not fit their respective cosy historical narratives have invited scrutiny, caused debate, and forced their way into mainstream culture. For over 40 years now, since *Le Chagrin et la Pitié*, French cinema has been breaking down the Vichy experience, and even the Algerian war, long shrouded in silence, has recently been breached.[3] This is not to say that an uplifting Resistancialist narrative does not survive, but, for each nostalgic pastel palette lamented by Sylvie Lindeperg in 'heritage films' such as *Laissez Passer* (*Safe Conduct*, Bertrand Tavernier, 2002),[4] and I would argue also *Monsieur Batignole* (Gerard Jugnot, 2002) and *Bon Voyage* (Jean-Paul Rappeneau, 2003), there is a dark, washed-out colour scheme in films like *Un Secret* (*A Secret*, Claude Miller, 2007), *Elle s'Appellait Sarah* (*Sarah's Key*, Gilles Pacquet-Brenner, 2010) and *La Rafle* (*The Round Up*, Rose Bosch, 2010) – all brave critical analyses even when their flaws mean the end result is somewhat blunted, self-indulgent or trite.

Although not all European cultures are as lively or as enthusiastically reflective as France's, and although much remains forgotten or untold, German, Dutch, Polish, Czech and Russian film-makers have a history of being attracted to uncomfortable subjects. This is arguably both a cultural and a commercial phenomenon: on the one hand, some of these cinematographies find a healthy market overseas, so that approaching domestic taboos may not harm their prospects; on the other hand, the images of these populations expected and enjoyed by foreign audiences are probably more fluid and certainly less reliant on a specific positive stereotype than that of Italians. In other words, the success of the *brava gente* narrative, as discussed in the previous chapter, means that audiences internationally expect narratives of Nazi collaborationism or anti-Semitism, ethnic discrimination or political violence from other European nations in a way they simply do not expect from Italians. And yet the process is circular: they do not expect these narratives because of their own prejudices, but also because they have never got them from Italy.

This final chapter complements the previous one with an analysis of the recurrent silences and amnesias in Italian cinema about Fascism. Consistent with the privileged characteristics of Italian self-representation is the absence of many aspects, characters, emotions, moments or ideas which would fatally undermine the *brava gente* stereotype. The cinematic timeline of Fascism outlined somewhat provocatively in Chapter 9 already showed how entire segments of the *ventennio*

have not featured in the story that Italian films have collectively told: effectively the whole period of Fascist consolidation, between the 1924 and 1925 crisis around the murder of Socialist MP Giacomo Matteotti and the creation of the Axis alliance in 1938. In between falls the most significant part of Fascist Italy, the bulk of the regime's policies, the contradictions between revolution and reaction, between the regime's totalitarian aspirations and its vital reliance on the establishment's support, the defence of the Church and of the social status quo. However, purely to enunciate all that is not there may be trivial, pointless and perhaps unfair: not everything can be represented; it is inevitable and legitimate to privilege especially significant and representative moments in a country's history; finally, not all absences have the same meaning, the same importance. This final chapter isolates the trends, investigates their significance and questions whether these absences can realistically be dismissed as irrelevant to or unrepresentative of Italy's Fascist *ventennio*, or whether political and cultural explanations may help understand them better.

The previous chapter has already skirted around some of these absences as it outlined the contours of the common denominators in historical cinema about the long Second World War. It showed, for example, how the centrality of the Resistance to Italy's cathartic story meant that a national narrative has in fact amounted to a geographically circumscribed one, concentrated on those areas where the Resistance fought and elevating them to national experiences. The experiences of the South are largely forgotten, for example, surviving only in Brancati's Sicilian stories, in a couple of episodes of *Paisà*, in Rosi's *Cristo Si è Fermato a Eboli*, in Lina Wertmüller's *Pasqualino Settebellezze* and in films like Nanny Loy's *Le Quattro Giornate di Napoli* and De Sica's *La Ciociara*. However, with the exception of Zampa's adaptations of the Sicilian novelist's stories, all these either impose a Northern gaze on the South's experiences or, as the last two films do, extend the narratives of collective and individual Resistance and martyrdom to moving and rare Southern settings, rather than truly engaging with Southern Italian experiences of Fascism and the war.

Along with the South, the extreme North has been represented even more rarely. For example, to my knowledge no film has addressed the experiences of linguistic minorities in the North, the German-speaking Italians of South Tirol or the Slovenian minority in the North East, whose stories would certainly be rich in emotional, historical and political insights, in regard to the behaviour of the Italian government and of Italian neighbours, and more broadly in relation to concepts of

national and group identity, as John Foot has recently demonstrated with the first comprehensive analysis of divided memories in Italy's frontier communities.[5] Those stories would add a further layer to the concept of civil war: an idea we have waited so long to see acknowledged that we now run the risk of taking it on acritically.

In the far North, the war between partisans and *repubblichini* lasted longest and was at its most brutal, and generally Italian filmmakers have preferred not to dwell on those desolate and blood-stained valleys, with some contemporary exceptions such as *Il Partigiano Johnny* and *Porzûs*. The militiamen of the Italian Social Republic did appear, of course, as early as the very first neorealist films on the subject, but they are seldom the centre of the narrative. On those rarest occasions when they are, such as in Giuliano Montaldo's *Tiro al Piccione* or in Michele Soavi's *Il Sangue dei Vinti*, the voice of the Fascist other is either transformed into an anti-Fascist one, as in Montaldo's film, or muted by an absurd relativism and cheap psychological explanations, as in the case of Soavi's Lucia.

Lucia is also characteristic of another interesting set of absences: those around women's experiences. Soavi's protagonist, the grief-stricken widow who trespasses into the male world of the militia because of the loss of another man, is an excellent example of the fake agency that male Italian filmmakers have predominantly given to their women. Plentiful as mothers, wives, lovers and – of course – prostitutes, what has mostly been left out of Italian cinematic memories is a genuine analysis of women's role under Fascism and of their response to those roles. With a few notable exceptions, in any event all written by men – Rossellini's Pina and Esperia, Bolognini's Libera, Vancini's Anna and Scola's Antonietta, as well as Montaldo's Agnese in the 1976 adaptation of Renata Viganò's novel *L'Agnese Va a Morire* (*And Agnes Chose to Die*, 1949) – there has not been a comprehensive female narrative, but only a chorus of supporting voices. Already marginalised by an overwhelmingly male industry, women's experiences were arguably further squeezed by the privileged foci of Italian interpretations of that period: those of class and politics, both traditionally interpreted as male realms by right and left alike. Beyond the reach of this work, there is certainly the scope for a broader discussion about the *brava gente* as a gendered narrative, not least to explore the possible implications for the contiguity of Fascist and anti-Fascist Italian patriarchy.

However, the crucial absence in Italy's cinematic memories of the long Second World War is that of its wars of aggression: the Italianisation of ethnic minorities; the pacification of Libya; the invasion of Ethiopia;

the expedition in aid of General Franco during the Spanish Civil War; the persecution of Italy's Jews; the occupation of Albania; the last-minute stab in France's back on 10 June 1940; the invasions of Greece and the Soviet Union; the wartime occupation of Southern France and the Balkans. By the time Mussolini's corpse was hanging by its feet in Piazzale Loreto, Italy had used conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction to kill about a million people,[6] and had become responsible for countless war crimes, especially in the brutal subjugation of Libya and Ethiopia, well before the alliance with Hitler.[7] The rest of this chapter examines this collective silence, which has two cinematic elements to it: one, the self-imposed silence of Italian filmmakers, from the left and the right; and, two, the silence imposed by censorship on *Lion of the Desert* (Moustapha Akkad, 1981), the Libyan–US co-produced blockbuster about the 1920s Libyan hero Omar al-Mukhtar, which was never broadcast in Italy until its screening on satellite television in 2009 – only 28 years on from its release.

If the cinema is a site of memory, then Italy's wars are excellent examples of memory's two corollaries: silence and amnesia. Perhaps article 11 of the 1947 Italian Constitution, which abhors war as a means of resolving international dispute, has such emotional and inspirational force that it should be allowed to act retrospectively, to rewrite Italian history and inform popular perceptions thereof. Or perhaps not, given that it is exactly Italy's history that inspired those who wrote it. Either way, Italy's wars have either disappeared from view or been reconstructed to fit the common denominators described in the previous chapter.

As we have amply seen, World War Two was not only not forgotten in postwar Italy, but, indeed, became a focal point of its collective identity, culture and politics: perhaps one of very few truly national traumas among Italy's fragmented history and divided memories. It would be nonsensical, then, for such an experience to be forgotten. Representations of the war instead became heavily sanitised to privilege some stories and to silence many other voices, starting with those of the soldiers who fought in France, North and East Africa, in the Mediterranean, in Greece and Albania, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union.

The experiences of these men were a threat to Italy's preferred postwar memory: on the one hand, a soldier performing his duty at the front was a visible symbol of Fascist aggression and, most importantly, belied the convenient fracture between Fascist government and Italian people so recurrent in the discourses of Italian memory; on the other hand, a veteran of those wars was only an unwelcome relic of a fallen idol.[8] These men's wartime traumas were different from those of the families they

had left at home, secretive and solitary as the latter had been gregarious and possible to share. They had not had the choice to partake in Italy's post-armistice redemption, and they returned to a society whose ideas of citizenship and masculinity were utterly different from those that had sent them to the front: as Ruth Ben-Ghiat has argued in relation to Alberto Lattuada's 1946 film *Il Bandito* (*The Bandit*),[9] returned servicemen were often out of place intimately and politically; lacking the legitimacy of organised Resistance but also the nostalgic pedigree of postwar Italy's minoritarian Fascist counter-memories, they struggled to find a place in the nation's memories of the past.

Only the opportunity of a shared sense of victimhood has allowed Italy's soldiers to take part in the national narrative of *brava gente*, anti-Fascist martyrdom and partisan catharsis, and then only rarely. The heat of the Abyssinian desert, the frost and mud of the Russian steppes, the island of Cephalonia, all sites of Italian military tragedies, became virtually unique memory landscapes for the soldiers' representation, while silence shrouded almost everything else. In the meantime, as Chapter 9 has argued, Italian cinema embraced the pre-existing and well-established stereotypes of military incompetence and unwillingness to fight, and manipulated them into a virtue. By virtue of his defeats, the Italian soldier came to represent pacifism, humanity and common sense, and was thus occasionally recycled into the narrative of *brava gente*, returning the favour by satisfying filmmakers' thirst for the ordinary bloke: for what is more socially representative than the army?

The resulting synthesis means that Italy's soldiers appear rarely and, when they do, they appear most often as demobilised soldiers, coherently with the disbanding of the Italian armed forces in the post-armistice scenario Italian filmmakers have consistently preferred. Some of these go on to join the Resistance, as the austere and nameless captain does in *Tutti a Casa*; others return home, like Innocenzi in the same film, but their pre-armistice life lingers in an ambiguous background. At times, this background is made explicit, but in most cases it remains only a trace: a black dress on a grieving widow, a black-and-white newsreel and a child's awkward question, symbols all used subtly in Giuseppe Tornatore's *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso* (*Cinema Paradiso*, 1988). As we have already seen, a few early postwar attempts, such as *Il Bandito*, *Caccia Tragica* or *Napoli Milionaria*, focused not without empathy on the struggle of the homebound veteran, but seldom has the wartime experience made it to centre stage.

When it did, characters and settings were so heavily sanitised as to become hardly different from the demobilised soldiers of post-armistice

films. Two models then emerge, quite often sharing key elements, which I will call here the '*faux*-war film' and the 'combat drama'. The former is a tragi-comic war film with no fighting, where homesick privates try to stay alive while hopeless officers grudgingly hang on to their sense of duty. 1960s comedies like *I Due Colonnelli*, *I Due Nemici* and *Italiani Brava Gente* (*Attack and Retreat*, Giuseppe De Santis, 1964), but also later attempts such as Dino Risi's *Lo Scemo di Guerra* (*Madman at War*, 1985) and its remake *Le Rose del Deserto* (*The Roses of the Desert*, Mario Monicelli, 2006), fit this model perfectly. In *I Due Nemici*, set around the British advance on El Alamein, Alberto Sordi reprises the role he had performed so eminently well in *Tutti a Casa*, albeit under a different name: that of the middle-ranking officer caught between the outward pomp of his position and the overwhelming desire to return home unscathed. In hope of achieving the latter goal, he allows two British prisoners to escape in the hope they will report on the paucity of Italian troops and allow them to evacuate the area. Caught himself shortly afterwards without firing a shot, he and the British officer enjoy a tense relationship that develops into reciprocal respect. Just as in *I Due Colonnelli*, set in Greece with a similar storyline, the comedic effect obtained by the contrast of British aplomb and Italian disorganisation also carries a dramatic strength based on a common Anglo-Italian humanity opposed to the barbarism of the other, the Germans in Steno's film and the African tribesmen in Hamilton's.

Lo Scemo di Guerra and *Le Rose del Deserto*, two unremarkable adaptations of the same semi-autobiographical novel by Mario Tobino,[10] share the comic aspirations and the lack of fighting of the films discussed above, as well as a stereotyped and ignorant representation of the African populations. The films follow a group of medical officers with the Italian army based in the Libyan desert during 1941–42, culminating in their retreat, and as such have a narrative justification for avoiding most fighting. They focus instead on the interaction of a number of stock characters of the Italian-style comedies: Sicilians passionate and uncouth; stubborn Sardinians and canny Neapolitans; uneducated Venetians and proud Tuscans; miserly Genoese and acidic, good-looking Milanese; and, of course, fast-talking Romans, street-wise mummy's boys. This federation of men deals as best it can with a mad officer obsessed with his wife and with the circumstances of the war, as well as with the temptation to chase voiceless local women, gorgeous and inaccessible objects of a disturbingly colonial lens. Both Risi and Monicelli fail to render the empathy and sense of the surreal which distinguished Tobino's novel, although through the character of private

Sanna, lifted from a different short story written by Giancarlo Fusco in 1961 and set during the Albanian campaign,[11] Monicelli at least tried to introduce some of the war's tragedy.

The veteran director, filming this work at 90 years of age, had his moments: for instance, General *Rombo di Tuono* (Thunderbolt; a caricature of General Graziani) has a surreal obsession with the need for a regimental cemetery which highlights cleverly the delusional state of much late Fascism. Nevertheless, even *Le Rose del Deserto*, the better of the two films, is bound by a formula that prevents any meaningful and critical engagement with the soldiers' dual experiences as occupiers, invaders and victims. Monicelli explained in a television interview how he surprised the actors with unexpected explosions on set to create a sense of authenticity to their response[12]; yet this is as shallow as that authenticity remains – very shallow indeed, that is – unable to wriggle out of the straightjacket imposed on it by a chronic belief that the average Italian, for all his or her flaws, could do only good. As Monicelli puts it in the interview that accompanies the DVD of the film:

> I told the story of the war, of kids who went to Africa thinking they were off on an adventure, a romantic-exotic adventure even, and instead found themselves in a story of fire, sand, hunger, thirst and of total lack of preparation.[13]
>
> The human condition, which is what I always discuss in my films, is always that of a loser, especially in Italy; for us Italians, however, this condition always carries a hope. It does not end in despair but always in a glimmer of hope, the expectation of redemption.[14]

The paradox brought about by the desire to break free from the politicised narratives of Italy's war by focusing on the average soldier, conscripted and uninterested in politics and the inability even to entertain the possibility that this average man might follow orders, let alone victimise enemies and civilian populations, is a feature also in Gabriele Salvatores's Oscar-winning *Mediterraneo* (1991). Perhaps the most representative and also the best of the Italian *faux*-war films, but also largely ignored in scholarly debates, with the exception of Millicent Marcus's work,[15] *Mediterraneo* is a moving and beautiful film, but not one that politically and historically challenged Italy's memory of the past. On the contrary, arguably its vast critical and popular success, in Italy and abroad, was ensured by the combination of aesthetic beauty and heart-warmingly flawed characters, wrapped in left-wing nostalgia for a

time – the characters' 1940s, but even more the author's 1970s – when lefties had at least the consolatory belief in a better world. Both snobbish and populist, as is Salvatores's wont, it is a politically hypocritical film that gives the spectator the promise of an alternative viewpoint while conforming to the usual uplifting image of Italianness and, indeed, elevating it to high-brow culture.

Exploiting the relativist loophole of German brutality, accurate perhaps but a loophole nonetheless, Salvatores turns the Italian occupation of Greece into a camping holiday in which the handful of Italians, like modern-day ancient Romans, are rapidly colonised by the metaphysical vitality, the pride and fearlessness of the Greeks they are supposed to rule over. It is not surprising, then, that Renzo Renzi, who had been arrested and tried by military police in 1953 for writing a script about the Greek campaign, flatly dismissed the film's comic tone.[16] *Mediterraneo*'s soldiers are a collection of conscripted peasants and anti-Fascists, with one indoctrinated sergeant holding on to a Fascist identity that his new surroundings will rapidly undo. These average Italians are literally forgotten by their commanders, explicitly and immediately reinforcing the convenient and omnipresent separation of the people from their political and military elites. Seduced by local women, cuisine, history and culture, they happily go native in a hardly rivalled melange of clichés, including the inevitable football match on the beach. Arguably, of course, Salvatores's choice of setting is unimportant, not a historical film but an allegorical one intending to historicise the theme of escape from society and conformism so crucial to all his films, from *Marrakesh Express* (1989) to *Puerto Escondido* (1992), and yet in doing so he conforms to Italy's selective memory of its Fascist past and to the national self-image that memory relies on.

These *faux*-war films, both stock comedies and intimate tragicomedies, defy the common denominators by adopting the stories of enlisted men and a pre-8 September 1943 setting, and yet they also use hindsight and the audiences' corpus of pre-conceived clichés retrospectively to offset the potential effects of this departure. In other words, while the form of their memories may change, their political, historical and cultural content stays the same. In comparison, the second model of Italy's representation of the early years of World War Two, that of the combat drama, is a much rarer and more problematic model, which seeks to follow the war film genre so successfully refined in American and British cinema. However, the Italian war film inevitably lacked the main ingredient of those classic paradigms: the certainty of the righteousness of one's cause. There was only one way of rectifying this, by

representing Italy after it changed sides, and yet these films were set against pre-armistice backgrounds: thus, the Italian war drama is ultimately not only as anachronistic as the *faux*-war film but also more false and more dangerous, often appearing wilfully to rewrite history and legitimise the Italians' cause.

The resurgence of the Italian war film in the 1950s, with *Carica Eroica* (*Heroic Charge*, Francesco De Robertis, 1952), *Divisione Folgore* (Duilio Coletti, 1955) and *El Alamein: Deserto di Gloria* (Guido Malatesta, 1958) among others,[17] and in more recent times with *Cefalonia*, *El Alamein: La Linea del Fuoco* and arguably *Il Cuore nel Pozzo*, somehow attempted to restore dignity to the Italian soldier without, however, either abandoning the *brava gente* framework or getting any closer to actually giving him a voice. While they contained fighting, their choice of setting was telling: brave soldiers fighting against all odds for a cause that was never theirs, either defeated and respected by their adversary or brutally murdered by him. Nevertheless, some of these few war films do stand out, specifically by singling out discipline, conduct, strategy, and combat as a virtue. These exceptions were noted, and, whether or not the filmmakers had meant to tap into a silent but not insignificant market of nostalgic nationalists, their representational choices were politically charged, both in the 1950s and, much in the same way, in the 2000s. The more recent war films, as we have seen in Chapter 1, were branded as revisionist and dismissed, simplistically and hurriedly, though not without some reason. The earlier efforts attracted similar criticism from the left: in 1954 Renzo Renzi – free but unable to make his own film – tarred them all as remnants of a Fascist mentality, with a sweeping but not unreasonable rationale[18]; *Carica Eroica* ended up in a parliamentary interpellation by Communist MPs Pietro Grifone and Giorgio Amendola, who called for the banning of a film they saw as barely disguised Fascist apologia[19]; *Divisione Folgore* and *El Alamein: Deserto di Gloria*, unremarkable though they are, stood out for their jingoism and conservatism, as well as for the celebration of an elite corps of Italian paratroopers that has an indelible historical, and some would say political, connection with Fascism (it was specifically set up in 1941 to invade Malta, then deployed in North Africa and there completely destroyed).

In all these cases, however, the inclusion of the soldier in Italy's dominant memory of the war was only possible through the silencing of his collective role as aggressor, through invasion and occupation, and even of his personal role as a fighter and a killer. As a result, the act of killing and the Fascist ideology are the paradoxical and astonishing absences of Italian war films set before September 1943. These are selective and significant silences because they are one-sided: in these films the Allies

kill as part of their professional task, often remotely through bombardments and tanks; only Italians are reluctant to use deadly force, while the Germans appear little or not at all. This is not always about being reluctant to fight, in accordance with the stereotypes of survivalism and cowardice we have already encountered, because even films which deliberately challenge those stereotypes still embrace the discourse of Italian aversion to killing.

El Alamein: La Linea del Fuoco is a fitting example. Monteleone had the ambition of producing a gritty war drama, full of realism and the experiences of hardened veterans of many fronts. As he put it, he wanted to challenge what he saw as the 'pornography of war' of Hollywood blockbusters such as *Pearl Harbour* (Michael Bay, 2001), and instead capture

> the spirit of the soldiers on the front line, the everyday problems in a siege situation; [. . .] the idea was to be right there in the trenches with them, to experience their fear of living on a razor's edge, between life and death.[20]

The bleak hero the audience is supposed to share the trench with, in Monteleone's dreams of authenticity, is the no-nonsense sergeant Rizzo of the Pavia regiment, who opens the film by nonchalantly disposing of the stray earlobe of a comrade pulverised by British artillery. However, Rizzo's familiarity with brutality has miraculously failed to numb his humanity, and he reluctantly kills, even in battle: a British soldier stranded in no-man's-land picks off the Italians who are attempting to rescue a fallen comrade, but only after all other avenues are defeated do the Italians respond with lethal force. The film replicates this scenario time and time again as the brave and competent Italian soldiers never initiate combat but only ever fight back. The reason for such reluctance is not tactical – the Italians being on the defensive – but moral: when, during their retreat, the starved, abandoned troops meet a company carrying the stallion once meant for Mussolini's triumphal entrance into Benghazi, a long stand-off ends in their sparing the animal's life, out of empathy for a fellow innocent. In a lecture to European screenwriting students that features interesting points of contact with Monicelli's words reported above, Monteleone expounded a frighteningly linear and familiar narrative:

> Unfortunately – he explained in answer to a question about the absence of the point of view of defeated nations in films about World War Two – the Germans are the really bad guys, because they were

> the Nazis, they had the concentration camps, and they did the Final Solution. The Italians were the 'not so bad guys.' We have to make a difference between the fascists, the fascist regime and normal people, because not all Italians were really fascist. The so called *camicie nere*, black shirts, those were the real bad guys. I preferred to tell the story of normal soldiers, the ones who had to go to war, not through choice. [...] Fascists came to power in 1922. Everybody born in Italy in that era was a fascist, the same way as we are all Catholics, just because we are born in Italy or another Catholic country. What interested me more was to show the ordinary people. The real bad guys were the generals and the politicians. The thousands of soldiers who died were normal people, ordinary people who only wanted to go back home.[21]

Even as his film claims to redress an absence of memory by telling the story of forgotten Italians (the film's trailer began with: 'Nobody has told their story'), Monteleone explicitly confirms all the stereotypes on which Italy's dominant memory of Fascism has been built: no-one was Fascist; one has to distinguish between Fascists and Nazis; it was the fault of a few black shirts; it was the fault of generals and politicians. Not one, not two, but three groups automatically exonerate all Italians, as though those groups were not also constituted by Italians, while Monteleone fails to acknowledge that the same 'ordinary people' he is interested in presumably also crammed Italian squares to listen to Mussolini, accepted Fascist policy and education, celebrated the creation of Italy's African Empire, acclaimed Hitler's visit to Rome. Meanwhile, again tellingly, he does not extend to Germany the courtesy of completely separating its people from its government. Thus, almost exactly like its tragi-comic *faux*-war film cousins, the Italian combat drama actually works as a palliative that conserves silence and prevents memory.

Monteleone's film may stand out from its peers for tackiness, but it is not alone in its representation of the *brava gente*'s attitude to killing as an inconceivable aberration of their atavistic values. Riccardo Milani's *Cefalonia*, perhaps the best of the RAI revisionist films and an honest film that politically belongs alongside *Il Cuore nel Pozzo* rather than *Il Sangue dei Vinti*, confirms the Italian war film's predilection for sites of defeat, and is filled with pacifist wartime heroism. While the film undoubtedly shared the contemporary attempt to restore dignity and bravery to the armed forces, it achieves this only by unusual means: bound by rules of engagement which apparently forbade them to shoot

anyone unless shot at several times over, the Italian war effort does indeed seem outstanding.

The Italian soldier's aversion to killing is not a contemporary invention. For instance, in 1962, *I Due Nemici* symbolically singles out animals – just as *El Alamein: la Linea del Fuoco* would later do – to symbolise Italian humanity. This time, the film uses the regimental mascot Micheletto, a tame young gazelle, whom neither British nor Italian soldiers have the heart to kill, even when they are starving or when the animal endangers their escape; instead, it is the four indigenous warriors who accompany the Italians – figures so ridiculously stereotyped they would fit quite well into Fascism's imperial propaganda – who kill the creature. And, in the same film, an ingenious trap set for a British armoured patrol results in a British tank catching fire, apparently killing none of its occupants but only the daring Italian major it accidentally crushes.

Even when courage, military skill and strategic genius are celebrated, even then Italians seemingly fight without killing. The British tank, for instance, returns in *El Alamein: Deserto di Gloria* and *Divisione Folgore* to separate Italian heroism from its visible and deadly consequences. One of a handful of reactionary war films produced in the 1950s, *El Alamein: Deserto di Gloria* is dedicated to 'the heroism of the Italian soldier', and celebrates Lieutenant Marchi, a spoilt boy more interested in girls than politics. So far is he from heroism and national pride that not only does he not want to go to war – understandably – but he also asks his father to solicit some way out. Other recruits, too, worry only about their exemption. At the cantonment, awaiting departure, he disobeys orders to see his British girlfriend Nancy and propose to her, while Nancy herself must be sternly reminded by the British consul that she is British and her duty is to her country, not to her romances.

In November 1942 at El Alamein, all these peace-loving recruits will learn to set their priorities straight, but those priorities were understandably disturbing to many of the film's contemporaries, especially on the left. The values of patriotism and comradeship, discipline, duty and self-sacrifice emerge as core military and human virtues, above political beliefs, perhaps even above civilian morality: the death of his comrades inspires a would-be deserter to a suicide attack; the character of Gennaro, a stereotypical Neapolitan mummy's boy, finally has his exemption from service granted only to tear it up; Marchi himself, assuming command, sanctions his late captain's denial of water to wounded and dying soldiers so as to favour able-bodied fighters – a policy he had previously abhorred. The war has changed these men,

but that change does not represent the refreshing acknowledgement of the soldiers' traumatic experiences silenced in Italian representations, but, rather, a right-wing celebration of the nation that borders on the nostalgic.

Ultimately, the film acritically supports its captain's statement that 'in war, one must only obey!' – so eerily reminiscent of the omnipresent Fascist motto 'believe, obey, fight' – rather than analysing it in the context of what Europe had learnt of nationalism and militarism during 'the age of catastrophe'.[22] The filmmakers wilfully decontextualise the desert fight between a handful of Italian heroes and the British army so as to leave their assessment of Fascist Italy ambiguously open. Indeed, Fascism is completely absent, as are all the institutions of the state that issue the orders that must so blindly be obeyed. After the initial call-up in 1940, the film leaps to 1942 so as to silence ideology, politics and the reasons and responsibilities for the war. However, that ultimately makes little difference to the right-wing heart of the film: even if the film is not trying to elevate the fight for the Nazi–Fascist cause but simply to celebrate heroic military conduct, regardless of its cause, would the two arguments not coincide after the experiences Italy had just gone through? Much the same point can be made for *Divisione Folgore*, perhaps even more openly militaristic because it is devoid of *El Alamein: Deserto di Gloria*'s pointless romantic narrative sandwich.

Context and the lack thereof were simultaneously discussed in the reception of these films. Zinni cites *Cinema Nuovo* critics, who sarcastically pointed out that most of these films could be set in ancient Greece, so little is the context they provide, 'if only we could suggest that ancient Greeks had the use of TNT'.[23] Quite ready to mock the lack of context in war films set in Africa or at sea, commentators on the left were much sharper in grasping the specificity of the historical context of films set during the Italian campaign in the USSR, such as *Carica Eroica*: when Andreotti defended the film as a celebration of 'the valour of the Italian soldier who put the Fatherland above political and ideological considerations',[24] his Communist questioners were quick to recommend the physical transfer of that celebration to a historical setting that would not simultaneously celebrate the Axis, and question the enduring presence of Fascist-era personnel in the censorship office.[25]

These jingoistic and reactionary films, bordering on apologia, exploited their ideological ambiguity to appeal not only to a general audience keen on action and adventure films, and on the war film

especially, but also to a nostalgic minority left completely uncatered for by Italy's filmic memory of the war. The *italiani brava gente* once again provided a mediation between these two cohorts, as the increasingly grim Italian heroes of *El Alamein: Deserto di Gloria* effortlessly retain the moral prerogatives of their civilian compatriots. Although 'the heroic Italian soldier' has to fight back hard to celebrate his prowess and courage, the viewer is shielded from the deaths that his military virtue presumably produces. During an artillery exchange with the British, shot with a continuous editing technique typical of newsreel footage, the Allies' shells land and kill, but the Italian ones only ever take off: the audience does not see one of them land. And this is not a matter of 1950s mores or protecting sensitive eyes, either, as the British are noble but merciless and the spectator is not spared the graphic details of the Italians' martyrdom. Even in close combat, when the desperate Italians fight for their lives, they destroy tanks but the spectator never witnesses the fate of their occupants. Only on one occasion do the British soldiers emerge from their vehicle: three injured men taken prisoners and immediately released unconditionally when Lt. Marchi realises he cannot care for them; these British men are little more than props in the *brava gente* play.

But it is Duilio Coletti's *Divisione Folgore* (1955) that provides both a rare exception to Italy's apparently killing-less war and the best example of it. First, an Italian man says 'we kill so as not to be killed,' and then, in a desert anti-tank fight mirroring the one depicted in *El Alamein: Deserto di Gloria* to the point of plagiarism, the film shows at least one brief glimpse of a British occupant unable to escape the burnt-out tank. But it is earlier that the film's tension between realism and rhetoric is played out in full. During a night-time raid on a British light artillery platoon, the Italian paratroopers open fire and kill at least two British soldiers, although only after demanding their surrender and receiving fire as a response: in this aesthetically impressive sequence, the camera shows the British man shooting, then cuts to the mouth of an answering machine gun, hiding its owner from view in the crucial moment, then cuts back to the dying British soldier. Immediately afterwards, an Italian soldier wielding a knife jumps into a dugout to kill a British man manning a machine gun, but just as he raises his weapon the Italian notices a deadly wound on his opponent: struck by empathy for his fellow man, he offers him water instead of finishing him off; they smile, and then, hit by shrapnel, they both die in a brotherly embrace (Figures 10.1 and 10.2).

Figures 10.1–10.2 Meaningful montage in Duilio Coletti's *Divisione Folgore* (1955)

Coletti's film, perhaps more coherently than its 1958 clone, wants to be both a celebration of Italian heroism and a pacifist film. As the superbly rhetorical epilogue states:

> The roar of the battle has died down in the silence of peace, which renders all hate useless and vain. But may these ordered lines of

> crosses in a desert no longer deserted be examples of heroism, of sacrifice and of duty: a warning from those who lived to those who live so that humanity may find anew the gift of love in the sign of Christ.

Nevertheless, while Coletti's attempt to engage on an emotional level with the experiences of the soldiers strikes a few valuable notes in lengthy sequences describing the importance of correspondence and the sharp contrast between pre-war and wartime priorities, his balancing act rests on the same historical and political duplicity as that of his contemporaries. The film features a number of traditional tropes of innocence, including a friar and a loving pet (a dog who is eventually parachuted into Libya with his owner!), and generally conforms religiously to the *brava gente* template: paradigmatic is the scene where a soldier in the trench muses about the beauty of life, even in hardship, words which will be repeated almost *verbatim* three years later in *El Alamein: Deserto di Gloria*.

But most of all *Divisione Folgore*, like all other war films, conforms to the silences indispensable to its balancing act: no killing and no Fascism; not a single narrative or visual reference to the regime. These patterns of memory construction, which belong in the realm of silence rather than that of amnesia, are replicated constantly throughout the postwar history of Italian cinema's representations of World War Two. Fighting, war and death are separated from killing, while the government that sanctioned them disappears into the shadows together with the question of its popular support. By rejecting the complexity of the soldiers' experiences and concealing the tensions that must have existed for some between patriotism and anti-Fascism, for others between a Fascist ideology and resentment towards the government, for still others between Catholicism and the job of killing other men, between comradeship and fear of death, these films do not restore a voice to these 'ordinary men' but, rather, exploit them as emotionally and politically reactionary props. The Italian war film, even in its allegedly grittiest, most brutal and most realistic forms, mistakes a change in the representation of the soldiers' experience for a genuine engagement with their lives: unsolicited, they bestow upon these men new characteristics of courage and strength in return for not telling their story.

Thus, almost exactly like its tragi-comic cousins, the *faux*-war films, the Italian combat drama simply extends the uplifting collective persona of the *italiani brava gente* to those who had once been left out of it.

In doing so, both the approaches through which Italian filmmakers had supposedly gone against the mainstream to represent inconvenient and previously untold stories actually fail on a number of counts: they do not shatter the silence that surrounds veterans' experiences; they do not fill the absence of the June 1940–September 1943 period in Italy's memories of the Fascist era; they do not threaten the stranglehold that the *brava gente* myth has on these memories, but, rather, reinforce it. The exception to this rule should have been Giuliano Montaldo's *Il Tempo di Uccidere* (*Time to Kill*, 1989), in which Lieutenant Silvestri rapes and murders an Ethiopian girl, but Montaldo's ambiguity in following this anti-hero and his lingering colonial gaze make this a rather anodyne discussion of the contagious brutality of war rather than a critique of Italian colonialism. Indeed, the film was received in this way, with disappointing but perhaps unsurprising nonchalance.[26] As O'Healy and Baratieri have noted,[27] themes of exoticisation and sexualisation are alive and well, and the only agency the Ethiopian victim possesses is that of haunting her persecutor through the spectre of a sexually transmitted disease. Taken on a quantitative basis alone, these films may question the statement that silences shroud Italy's first years of World War Two, but considered qualitatively they do not; indeed, they lend strength to this argument. Indeed, Baratieri has convincingly posited that the silences we find in Italian cinema are not in the sparse cinematic production but, rather, 'inscribed within' each production 'which mutes the Africans, and makes their cultures unrecognisable and their problems misrepresented'.[28]

And, as Fascist Rome's latest legionnaires disappeared into the background through the selective use of silence and euphemism, thus its first soldiers were altogether eclipsed, making cinema a site of amnesia as well as a site of memory. The veterans of Italy's expansionist wars around Africa and Europe, before 1940, survive in the country's cinematic memory mostly as a faintly embarrassing trace. Cinema reflects, here as elsewhere, an amnesia that has long gripped Republican Italy at all levels, from popular culture to institutional commemoration, from politics to historiography. The latter has in the recent past made significant advances, thanks to the work of Italian historians such as Del Boca and Nicola Labanca,[29] and of English-language scholars from a variety of disciplines, among whom the works of Giuseppe Finaldi,[30] Nicholas Doumanis,[31] Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller,[32] and Daniela Baratieri stand out.[33] This new wave of scholarship, which Italian academia still uneasily endures,[34] has gone much of the way towards lifting the veil that long covered Italian colonialism, its crimes against humanity and

Italy's postwar denial of this. Yet, unlike the case of the *foibe*, this topic has never quite taken off as an Italian debate and certainly never made the leap from academia to street, largely because political parties and the popular media have not taken on the role of cultural mediators – or indeed of patrons – that they have adopted for the massacres of Yugoslav–Italians.

Less has been written about Italian colonialism in the cinema, a crucial part of Italian memory-formation which has certainly contributed to this particular silence becoming oblivion. Gian Piero Brunetta's 1990 conference proceedings[35] and Liliana Ellena's useful but underwhelming edited volume produced in 1999 to accompany a series of films represent in some ways both the exception – the first, and still only, such volumes on the subject – and the rule, as they consistently privilege range over depth.[36] For that depth we need to turn to Roberta di Carmine,[37] and once again to Baratieri,[38] who have demonstrated the remarkable continuities between the colonial and post-colonial cinematic discourses on Africa. In particular, Baratieri's study of the 1955 re-release of Augusto Genina's *Bengasi* (1942) as *Bengasi Anno '41* is one of the outstanding essays on the broader topic of postwar Italy's memory, forgetting and silence around Africa.[39]

In the films discussed in this book, Africa appears a handful of times, mostly confined to the desert warfare of 1942 and framed in the Italocentric and sanitised ways we have just described. But Fascist Italy's record in the African colonies, the brutal pacification of Libya and the invasion of Ethiopia in 1936, has featured even less: only twice, in fact, in *Anni Difficili* and *Anni Facili*, perhaps not accidentally two efforts of Zampa and Brancati's moralising mission: in the former, Piscitello's son is sent to Ethiopia (and then to Spain, another forgotten Italian war); in the latter, an old man seeks to claim a veteran's pension by claiming to have served the government of Galla and Sidama. Otherwise, the topic is almost entirely ignored. And even Zampa's films made no mention of the hundreds of thousands of Libyan and Ethiopian people murdered by Italians: little more than traces, indeed.

This has never been an accidental absence, the fruit of the inevitable impossibility of discussing everything, showing everything. As hard as it is for an historian to abandon all scruples in interpreting the significance of an absence, the evidence this book has unearthed makes a convincing argument that cinema about the Fascist period deliberately shielded audiences from Italy's crimes in Africa and from the inevitable and fundamental questions which these would have posed. Commercial concerns, no doubt, could be cited as the reason for such an absence:

a film is a commercial product that needs to attract funds, needs to sell. However, such an explanation is only partially accurate, and ultimately trite and intellectually lazy. First, this answer assumes a direct relationship between popular memories, self-perception and historical cinema, but if that is true then surely the absence of Africa in film becomes proof of public opinion's amnesia around it, and thus reinforces rather than detracts from the point. Second, many European cinematographies have routinely broached the worst pages of their own histories and found an audience, and Italian cinema itself has at times taken on state terrorism, the Mafia, and society's moral standards with bravery and sensitivity, and not without commercial success. The queues of young Parisians waiting to see *Le Chagrin et la Pitié*, not exactly a blockbuster, spring to mind.

Much is made of the need to remember and of the cost of forgetting, sometimes with little more than rhetoric in mind. However, it is arguable that one of the tangible consequences of the refusal to have these debates – quite apart from memory, national self-awareness and historical knowledge – is that many tropes of colonial representations of Africa have persisted for a long time in Italian cinema, both in films that deal with the colonies and in those that deal with postwar Africa and Africans. African men have continued to be framed as little more than comedy savages, as in Ettore Scola's *Riusciranno i Nostri Eroi A Ritrovare l'Amico Scomparso in Africa* (*Will Our Heroes Be Able to Find Their Friend Who Has Mysteriously Disappeared in Africa?*, 1968), and African women have continued to be objectified as the graceful princesses and exotic temptresses of an orientalist and voyeuristic gaze, such as that of Mario Monicelli's camera in *Le Rose del Deserto*.

Italian colonialism has not attracted institutional recognition, but has also failed to generate the counter-cultural movements that other politically charged and difficult topics have obtained, because it carries a collective accusation of the nation, and not only of one of its parts. The debates that Libya and Ethiopia should generate are historical and political, but they also strike at the construction of a national character that has support, explicit or tacit, across the range of Italy's politics: the decisiveness and ruthlessness of the regime in dealing with indigenous resistance in the occupied territories qualifies the artificial distinction from Nazi Germany so thoroughly exploited in Italy's memories of World War Two; the genuine joy that Italians at home derived from the proclamation of the Empire questions the complementary distinction between Fascism and Italians, government and people; the racist laws

issued in Ethiopia in 1937,[40] as early as could be arranged after its conquest, prove that the 1938 anti-Semitic Manifesto was consistent with a reasonably widespread racism, and not an unfortunate consequence of a pro-German realignment[41]; and, finally, the willingness of Italian citizens to carry out these crimes shatters the mirror of the *italiani brava gente*. In other words, dredging up the memories of Italy's African Empire would endanger all the staples of Italy's dominant memory of the Fascist period and, to revisit Augé's metaphor, quite possibly make the coastline crumble.

Further proof of the political nature of this amnesia is provided by the fact that when somebody else has brought Italy's African empire to the screen Italy has collectively ignored it with astonishing diligence. When the Syrian director Moustapha Akkad filmed his Libyan-funded American blockbuster *Lion of the Desert*, in 1980, the Italian government did not ban it; it even gave permission to use studios and locations on Italian soil, much to the outrage of the neofascists[42]; pressure was not put on other countries to censor the film; Italians did not hurl cobblestones at the Libyan embassy or call for a boycott of that country's interests; public debates were not held or prevented. Instead, no Italian distributor bought the rights to Akkad's film, which consequently was never submitted to the Ufficio di Revisione Cinematografica and thus has, still three decades on, incurred neither censorship nor any other formal sanction. It was simply never seen or discussed in Italy, in an elegant and frighteningly efficient censorship by inertia that was undoubtedly made more straightforward by the film's failure to attract accolade abroad.

Lion of the Desert tells the story of Omar Mukhtar, the teacher who led the Libyan resistance against Italy's occupation between 1912 and 1931, when an increasingly brutal Italian repression organised by General Graziani captured, tried and executed him. Akkad constructed a predictably hagiographic but genuinely sensitive portrait of Mukhtar, although he largely failed in the attempt to superimpose a presentist narrative of national struggle on the Bedouins' guerrilla fight and thus to establish a symbolic link between Mukhtar and Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, who bankrolled the production. The attempt was there, attested to by the extensive use of the word 'patriots' and by the recurrent emphasis on orphans as bearers of testimony and of future Libyan agency. But the film was too international, and its cinematic references too Western, for it to work as a genesis myth of Libyan nationalism: with 8000 voiceless Libyan extras and an American, British and

European all-star cast that took all the speaking roles, ultimately it was always a film for foreign, not Libyan, audiences.

Elsewhere there will be ample scope to discuss *Lion of the Desert* in the context of post-colonial theory and ask whether the voice of these persecuted indigenous peoples can effectively be captured by Anthony Quinn and John Gielgud, but in the context of this book what is most interesting is the reversal of the role of Italians from victims to oppressors. Akkad attributes to Italian soldiers and colonial bureaucrats connotations that the cinemas of Italy and beyond had traditionally given to the Germans, and certainly never to Italians: Mussolini is erratic, volatile and loud, fantasising about world domination like a bald and chubby Charlie Chaplin in front of terrified and confused generals; in the field his officers are ruthless and, most originally, his soldiers are equally violent – efficient and unquestioning perpetrators of the army's policies of repression and ethnic cleansing. Major Tomelli denies a condemned man time to pray and then mocks a religious man's beard – a recurrent trope of Nazi treatment of Hasidic Jews – before striking him repeatedly; the troops are faceless and inhumane: they fill in wells, burn fields, kill stock, burn villages, forcibly remove populations to concentration camps, rape. These things imply not just the brutality of anti-guerrilla warfare but a direct and immediate link for the audience to traits – *hubris*, inhumanity, sadism and nonchalance – which belong unmistakably to postwar cinematic Nazis in both European and American cinemas.

There is some ambiguity in the representation of Italians in this film, certainly more than is traditional with Germans, but the elements that contradict Italian brutality are themselves ambiguous and, in any case, the forcefulness, pervasiveness and uniqueness of the negative images of Italians are such that they cannot be wholly undone. First, there is the character of the young lieutenant Sandrini, a well-educated volunteer, fresh off the boat, bright, brave and clearly disturbed by what he sees: his conscience will lead him to refuse to order the execution of a woman, and he will subsequently be shot in the back by his own evil comrade. Second, there is the officer who briefly provides legal defence at Mukhtar's trial, rather preposterously taking on colonialism and human rights against his own superiors, who are quick in hushing him up. Third, there are the regrets of Graziani himself, otherwise quite comfortable with brutality, who is clearly saddened by the impending death of a foe so brilliant as to defy him for long in battle. But all these are arguably accidental narrative quirks, designed to qualify other characters rather than exonerate some Italians: in the first instance, the lieutenant's

murder serves to reinforce the cruelty of Italian troops even as it excuses one individual; in the second instance, the director cannot resist the chance to provide a defence in hindsight and simultaneously showcase the trial's ridiculousness; in the third instance, Graziani's change is baffling and certainly designed to reinforce Mukhtar's personal sanctity – such that even his persecutors love him – rather than to qualify the butcher Graziani's cruelty.

Then there is another key moment, perhaps the most significant in the representation of Italian crimes, when an Italian officer strolls around a group of Libyan prisoners picking out and murdering individuals: he suddenly sees a father and child, lingers over the child, changes his mind several times, then finally shoots the father in cold blood. For what seems like an eternity an audience grown on a diet of monstrously evil Nazis and good, merciful Italians fears for the child, but the choice of the father does not offer respite: it simply reveals the intimate horror of the act of choosing, the considered deliberation to murder, and thus further undoes the myth of the inevitable casualties of war; on the contrary, then, in sparing a child this Italian man is probably the closest possible to the filmic stereotype of a Nazi, whose very idea of mercy reveals his inhumanity and his *hubris*.

Given such an unforgiving depiction of Fascist Italy's criminal policies, one would have perhaps been justified in expecting a backlash at the film's release similar to that which *Le Chagrin et la Pitié* had endured in 1971 France: first, to draw some, a minority, to support it and call for a greater debate; second, to inspire others to embrace it, blame it on Fascism and hope it will go away; third, to attract government censorship, through ban or boycott. But none of these happened, and the fact that nobody now remembers *Lion of the Desert* while here I still use Ophuls's film as a paradigm might at least partly explain the muted reception of Akkad's film.

Both the support for and the animosity against Akkad's film took on unusual and ultimately telling stances. The government responded through indifference and silence, and when the MSI demanded that it boycott the film it hid behind the unexplained (and inexplicable) failure of all Italian distributors to purchase the film and apply for a censorship visa. With the matter out of its hands, the institutional response was random and somewhat muddled, left to local authorities: thus, the film was repeatedly sequestered in Trento but tacitly allowed everywhere else,[43] first at the Montecatini Film Festival in 1983: there, exploiting the loopholes of Italian legislation, festival organisers were able to show the film semi-clandestinely, but legally, as long as they did not hire a theatre to

do so.[44] The police looked the other way in the sleepy spa town in a historically left-wing region, Tuscany, which was presumably less likely to experience trouble than Trento, the Alpine capital of Trentino-Alto Adige, Italo-German and steeped in its own complex mix of memory and amnesia.

The matter of this Libyan film should have been easier to resolve for the left, a perfect opportunity to celebrate anti-Fascism in the past and embarrass the DC in the present, while showcasing a historic dislike of colonialism and a more recent sympathy for Arab nationalism that already in the 1980s characterised much of the European left. Instead, like the government's reaction, that of the opposition was ambiguous: in Parliament the PCI asked for clarity and encouraged defiance of the alleged ban in 1982,[45] and again – having received no answer – in 1983,[46] but outside Parliament the party elected not to take the matter further. When the film was eventually screened, for instance, the left gave it little attention, largely responding by contextualising it in a lazy and ultimately cowardly way, now within the history of European imperialism, now within that of Italian censorship history,[47] now within that of Nazi–Fascist crimes,[48] now even within the global politics of occupation and guerrilla, especially in Algeria and Vietnam.[49] De Tommasi reported a paradigmatic conversation after the Montecatini screening: 'It is not anti-Italian; it is domestic Libyan politics,' said one; 'it is about all genocides, the French in Indonesia, the Americans in Vietnam,' replied the other.[50] In other words, they read Akkad's film as anything but the chance of a belated process of collective introspection. Among the articles dedicated to the film in the Italian press there is not a single actual review, no opinion on the text and, crucially, no attempt to bypass censorship and broaden the debate to a cultural and historical discussion about Italian colonial crimes.

In a further twist, it would fall on the unlikely shoulders of Rupert Murdoch, whose credentials either as a revolutionary or as a historian are doubtful, to lift the veil. Although there are signs that the film was screened by an obscure Roman local channel, Teleambiente, on 19 July 1998,[51] only on 11 June 2009 did the film make a significant appearance on Italian television screens, through Sky's satellite framework. Interestingly, this happened just as Colonel Muammar Gaddafi landed in Rome with Omar Mukhtar's picture pinned to his lapel and his elderly grandson at his side, but may have had more to do with the tax war between Murdoch's Sky television and the Berlusconi government, which had in 2008 doubled goods and services tax on satellite channels, but not on terrestrial private channels such as Berlusconi's own Mediaset.[52]

And so the circle is complete: we are back where this book started, to television and the Berlusconi era, and also back to revisionism, although of a different kind, not historical revisionism but the revisionism of memory. Thus, *Lion of the Desert* delivered on the prediction of the idealistic Lieutenant Sandrini, when he answers Graziani's promises of imperial greatness by stating: 'what happens if we are forgotten in Rome and only remembered in Libya?' As in many moments of the film, hindsight was at play in writing that line. Nevertheless, Akkad's film remains simultaneously a site of memory, for Libyans, and a site of amnesia for Italians, who – Sky subscribers or not – persistently ignore the story it tells.[53]

A site of amnesia, like a site of memory, is a two-way relationship; the audience is an agent in this: we cannot ask only what the films failed to show, the speeches to address, the historians to study, the plaques to cast in bronze, the monuments to sculpt in stone; hard though it is, we must also query what the rememberer wanted to remember, what he or she subconsciously forgot and consciously keeps quiet. The text of a film may interpret history and the present, make an argument, select, remember and forget, but it is these 'communities of memory' who apportion its meaning. *Il Federale*'s legacy of multiple misunderstandings shows that it is not enough to show, to say, to submit for reflection: the audience has the choice to avert its eyes, and even, as in the case of *Il Federale*'s box office success, to look, enjoy and yet not see.

The absences about Fascism in postwar Italian cinema have not been random but coherent, consistent and cogent. These absences, whether the result of amnesia or of silence, are remarkably consistent common denominators across the postwar period, even more than presences which occasionally attract a counter-memory: absences are all but unchallenged. Furthermore, they include the exclusion of episodes that are not only significant to Italy's history but also relevant to understanding Italians under Fascism and representative of their experiences. The invasion of Ethiopia in particular was a crucial event in Fascist Italy's history, and one which, notwithstanding some popular scepticism, opposition and dismay,[54] is widely regarded as the apogee of Mussolini's popularity and which arguably sanctioned the ultimate direction of Fascist foreign and racial domestic policies.[55] Africa was not just a policy of the Fascist regime; it was arguably one of the moments of highest popularity for the regime and for Mussolini personally. In a carefully stage-managed Luce newsreel, Mussolini declared war on Ethiopia via radio, speaking to crowds assembled throughout Italy: he spoke from his office at Palazzo Venezia but not from its infamous

balcony, as would have been normal, further to stress the point of Italian unity. In his speech he emphasised the indissoluble equation between Italy and Fascism, and, though he was undoubtedly overstating, as usual, bluffing in the face of international sanctions, he was also milking the popular triumph of his imperial venture. Furthermore, the crimes committed in Ethiopia and Libya were not uncharacteristic of Italian military behaviour abroad, and ought to be significant enough to warrant analysis, to raise questions about our self-perception – as is consistently done overseas – if only the answers were not so unpleasant.

Evidently, the significance of these forgotten events does not question but justifies the act of forgetting itself, practised consciously until it is no longer conscious and until even a stray memory seems fictional and any unexpected voice a distant echo. All the absences in postwar Italy's representations of the Fascist period fail to undermine – and therefore they reinforce – concepts of Italian victimhood, goodness and catharsis, strategically supporting their main tropes: shallow support for Fascism; subservience to Germany; separation of people from elites.

Peter Novick makes an incisive and uncomfortable point when he questions the contemporary obsession with historical memory. It is an obsession that often misses both the uniqueness of history and its alleged applicability to a given present: 'Never again the slaughter of the Albigensians,' he writes, pointing to the hollow commandment that is at the centre of much political discourse around memory.[56] Never again, but never again what? In Italy the cinema has contributed to constructing a memory based both on genuine anti-Fascism and on the unwillingness to analyse what Fascist Italy was like: it is a paradox of memory in which the rememberer is asked to prevent past mistakes from happening again and yet is encouraged to forget what those mistakes might have been, or that they ever even took place.

Epilogue

In remembering, interpreting and representing Fascism, Italian cinema could not separate history from national identity. This is the key to understanding the questions we posed at the outset. The *brava gente* stereotype haunts a landscape eroded by hubris and humiliation, devastation and reconstruction, trauma and survival, ideology and experience. Resisting the threat of revision and the occasional head-on collision, the myth of Italian goodness has found political sponsors on all sides and a vast and willing audience to rally around it and drive it on. Along the way, Italy's discourses of flawed decency and instinctive humanitarianism have played a leading role in determining acceptable and unacceptable tropes of representation, securing the boundaries of memory against the wilderness outside. On the inside were multiple voices of victimhood and sacrifice, resilience and triumph, temptation and perdition; on the outside, in the realm of the forgotten, Fascist Italy's million victims were laid to unrest, allowed back only as fleeting visitations.

The counter-narratives of 'the defeated' that have emerged in recent years only prove the immobility of Italy's memory. Luciano Violante's 1996 speech, which introduced 'the defeated' in cultural debates, only introduced a new site of memory that already contained old sites of amnesia. The speaker himself embodied them: the son of a Communist journalist forced to migrate to Ethiopia by the Fascist regime, Violante was born in 1941 in a British internment camp at Dire Daua, in the East of the country. Yet his ambition was the revision of the *repubblichini*'s motivation, not a broad and popular reappraisal of the Fascist past, starting from Italy's wars of aggression. Violante's objective was a belated reconciliation through bipartisan memory, not a rigorous revisionism of the *brave gente* myth. However, such a revision would have restored

a voice to people much less well represented than old Fascists in Italy's historiography and memory (and Parliament): Italy's victims in Libya, Ethiopia, Spain, Albania, France, Greece and the USSR, for example, but also Violante's own father, the anti-Fascist forced to partake in Mussolini's imperialist utopia by becoming a colonist himself.

At the root of the problem is a misdiagnosis; as far as Italy's memories are concerned, the main issue has not been partisanship, but the fact that partisanship has become an alibi to mask the lack of courage required to unravel the narrative of intrinsic Italian goodness that underpins those memories. In closing his gripping account of Italian history since 1796, Christopher Duggan considers with some apprehension that in the new 'millennium "Italy" appeared still too uncertain and contested an idea to provide the emotional core of a nation'.[1] Yet the mythology of *italiani brava gente* arguably acts as just such a core, even though it does not translate into the civic duty Duggan referred to. Thus, the solution need not necessarily be a 'shared memory', or at least not one built on the mediated compromise between two opposing poles; the impetus to drop the taboos of Italy's memory cannot be separated from the definitive retirement of the increasingly tired *brava gente* narrative.

There is arguably an opportunity to attempt this now that incompetence and excesses have caught up with the demagogue Berlusconi. Will memory be released from petty electoral concerns? I dare not think so, as new populist rabble-rousers quickly scramble to replace the void left by the former Prime Minister. But, regardless of what will come to pass, the triumph of Berlusconi's populism demonstrates once more the need to relinquish old stereotypes and address the bitter issues of conformism, familism and clientelism endemic to Italy. Italy's democracy is less fragile than it seems, and, having withstood terrorism, corruption and the Mafia, it can arguably survive some much-needed introspection.

Cinema may yet play a part in helping Italy reflect on its past. Perhaps an Italian *Le Chagrin et la Pitié* will emerge to lead the debate rather than follow it; perhaps the time is right for cinema to tackle Italy's Fascist empire, and thus speak of past and present to a new generation of Italians growing up in an increasingly multicultural reality. Perhaps. Yet Italy today lacks the pre-existing thirst for self-analysis that usually inspires even trailblazers like Ophuls. Cinema needs money, ideas, expertise and technology, but it also needs audiences to have the curiosity to ask the question and the self-confidence to deal with the answer.

Notes

1 Remembering the Long Second World War in Europe

1. The news was widely reported on British online media on 27 January 2011. See, for example, the *Daily Mail*, 'Nazi tunes: Shame-faced Apple Bosses Forced to Remove Marching Anthem from Sale on Holocaust Memorial Day' and the *Daily Telegraph*, 'Apple Removes Nazi Anthem from iTunes Store'.
2. Charles Hawley, 'Historians Condemn Commemoration Day Proposal', *Der Spiegel* (English-language online version), 15 February 2011.
3. Agence France Presse, 'Austrian Court Says Alleged World War Two Criminal Senile', reported by the European Jewish Press, 20 June 2008.
4. Associated Press, 'Nazi Cake Gets Austrian Pastry Shop in Trouble', reported by MSNBC and other outlets, 4 May 2011.
5. News of the controversial march is widely reported each year, though less so in 2011 than in previous years. See *Voz Iz Neias*, 'Riga, Latvia – Latvians Honor Waffen SS Fighters', 16 March 2011.
6. David Forgacs and Stephen Gundle (eds), *Mass Culture and Italian Society from Fascism to the Cold War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).
7. Sebastiano Vassalli, 'A Sanremo si canterà l'Italia unita ma senza *Giovinezza* e *Bella ciao*', *Corriere della Sera*, 11 January 2011.
8. Xan Brooks, 'Rumours Rise of *King's Speech* Oscar Boycott', the *Guardian*, 20 January 2011.
9. Christopher Hitchens, 'Churchill Didn't Say That', *Slate*, 24 January 2011.
10. Omer Bartov, *Erased: Vanishing Traces of Jewish Galicia in Present-Day Ukraine* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).
11. Exiled in Spain, the former head of Vichy's Commissariat for Jewish Affairs claimed that 'at Auschwitz only lice were gassed'. Interview in *L'Express*, 28 October 1978.
12. Stephen Gundle, 'The "Civic Religion" of the Resistance in Postwar Italy', *Modern Italy*, 5:2 (2000) 113–32.
13. See Norbert Frei, *Adenauer's Germany and the Nazi Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).
14. Chantal Kesteloot, 'The Role of the War in National Societies: The Examples of Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands', in Jörg Echternkamp and Stefan Martens (eds), *Experience and Memory: The Second World War in Europe* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010) 21–39.
15. Henri Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).
16. *Ibid*. 15–18.
17. Robert Aron and Georgette Elgey, *Histoire de Vichy: 1940–1944* (Paris: Fayard, 1954).
18. Piotr Madajczyk, 'The Second World War in Poland', in Echternkamp and Martens (eds), *Experience and Memory* (2010) 70–85.

19. Sergei Kudryashov, 'Remembering and Researching the War: The Soviet and Russian Experience', in Echternkamp and Martens (eds), *Experience and Memory* (2010) 87.
20. Eva-Clarita Onkena, 'The Baltic States and Moscow's 9 May Commemoration: Analysing Memory Politics in Europe', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 59:1 (2007) 23–46.
21. Taras Kuzio, 'History, Memory and Nation Building in the Post-Soviet Colonial Space', *Nationalities Papers*, 30:2 (2002) 241–64.
22. Annette Wieviorka, *Déportation et Génocide: Entre la Mémoire et l'Oubli* (Paris: Hachette Littératures, 1992) 40, 136–42.
23. Mark Connelly, ' "We Can Take It!" Britain and the Memory of the Home Front in the Second World War', in Echternkamp and Martens (eds), *Experience and Memory* (2010) 60–4.
24. Richard Bosworth, *Whispering City. Rome and Its Histories* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press: 2011) 256–8.
25. Kay Gladstone, 'Separate Intentions: The Allied Screening of Concentration Camp Documentaries in Defeated Germany in 1945–46: *Death Mills* and *Memory of the Camps*', in Toby Haggith and Joanna Newman (eds), *The Holocaust and the Moving Image* (London: Wallflower Press, 2005) 50–64.
26. Mary Fulbrook, *German National Identity after the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999).
27. Filippo Focardi and Lutz Klinkhammer, 'The Question of Fascist Italy's War Crimes: The Construction of a Self-acquitting Myth (1943–1948)', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 9:3 (2004) 330–48.
28. John Foot, *Italy's Divided Memories* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
29. Davide Rodogno, 'Italiani Brava Gente? Fascist Italy's Policy toward the Jews in the Balkans, April 1941–July 1943', *European History Quarterly*, 35:2 (2005) 213; see also Jonathan Steinberg, *All or Nothing. The Axis and the Holocaust, 1941–1943* (London: Routledge, 1990).
30. Rodogno, 'Italiani Brava Gente?' *European History Quarterly* (2005) 213–40.
31. Angelo Del Boca, *Italiani, Brava Gente?* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza Editore, 2005); Giuseppe Finaldi, 'Adowa and the Historiography of Italian Colonialism', *Modern Italy*, 1:3 (1997) 90–8.
32. Henri Rousso, 'A New Perspective on the War', in Echterkamp and Martens (eds), *Experience and Memory* (2010) 7.
33. Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
34. This expression was used in the special issue 'Génocides: lieux (et non-lieux) de mémoire', *Revue d'Histoire de la Shoah: le Monde Juif*, 181 (2004).
35. Richard Bosworth, *From Auschwitz to Hiroshima: History Writing and the Second World War* (London: Routledge, 1994) 1–7.
36. Maurizio Zinni, *Fascisti di Celluloide* (Venice: Marsilio, 2010).
37. Robert Rosenstone, 'The Historical Film as Real History', *Film-Historia*, 5:1 (1995) 5.
38. Robert Rosenstone, 'History in Images/History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting History onto Film', *The American Historical Review*, 93:5 (1988) 1173–85.
39. Hayden White, 'Historiography and Historiophoty', *The American Historical Review*, 93:5 (1988) 1193–9.

2 The Blood of the Defeated

1. Luciano Violante, opening address of the new Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies. *Atti della Camera dei Deputati, XIII Legislatura, Seduta n. 1 del 9/5/1996*, p. 37. The speech is available online at http://storia.camera.it/presidenti/violante-luciano/xiii-legislatura-della-repubblica-italiana/discorso:0#nav.
2. «Mussolini non ha mai ammazzato nessuno», *Il Corriere della Sera* online, 11 September 2003.
3. Richard Bosworth, 'A Country Split in Two? Contemporary Italy and Its Usable and Unusable Pasts', *History Compass*, 4:6 (2006) 1090.
4. Donning a partisan's handkerchief, Berlusconi celebrated 'Communists and Catholics, Socialists and Liberals, Actionists [members of the Action Party] and Monarchists' who 'faced with a shared tragedy, [and] wrote – each in their own way – a famous page in our history, on which our Constitution and our freedom are both based'. Silvio Berlusconi, '25 aprile: un onore e un impegno', *Il Corriere della Sera* online, 25 April 2009.
5. ' "Bambini bolliti", la Cina protesta', *Il Corriere della Sera* online, 29 March 2006.
6. 'Berlusconi al tedesco Schulz: «Kapò»', *Il Corriere della Sera*, 2 July 2003.
7. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Harper Perennial, 1993).
8. Matteo Moder, 'Guerra civile ai confini orientali', *Il Manifesto*, 24 August 1997, p. 24.
9. Gabriella Gallozzi, 'Non è revisionismo, è una storia che va raccontata', *L'Unità2*, 8 August 1997, p. 3.
10. In April 2012, protesting the annual celebrations for Liberation Day, Fascist posters saluted the soldiers of Salò by provocatively appropriating the lyrics of Communist songwriter Francesco Guccini's *La Locomotiva*, 'Heroes are all young and beautiful,' which referred to anarchist activists at the turn of the twentieth century. Carlo Moretti, 'Guccini contro i manifesti di Salò: "Offesa e tradita la mia *Locomotiva*" ', *La Repubblica*, 23 April 2012.
11. Roberto Silvestri, 'Scandaloso *Porzûs*', *Il Manifesto*, 2 September 1997, p. 7.
12. Enzo Natta, '*Porzûs*', *Famiglia Cristiana*, 15 October 1997.
13. Alfredo Boccioletti, 'Macché Western. E' storia-spettacolo', *Il Resto del Carlino*, 18 September 1997.
14. Gabriele Polo, 'La storia e il fango', *Il Manifesto*, 9 August 1997, p. 5.
15. See Richard Bosworth and Patrizia Dogliani (eds), *Italian Fascism: History, Memory and Representation* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999); Richard Bosworth, 'Coming To Terms with Fascism in Italy', *History Today*, 55:11 (2005) 18–20; and Richard Bosworth, 'A Country Split in Two?' (2006) 1089–101.
16. John Foot, *Italy's Divided Memories* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
17. Angelo Del Boca, *Italiani, Brava Gente?* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza Editore, 2005).
18. Angelo del Boca (ed.), *La Storia Negata* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza Editore, 2009).
19. Martinelli, *Libero*, 4 February 2007.
20. Marcel Ophuls, *Le Chagrin et la Pitié* (Paris: Alain Moreau, 1980).
21. Gallozzi, *L'Unità2*.

22. Danilo De Marco, 'Nubi sulla Resistenza', *L'Unità2*, 8 August 1997, p. 3.
23. Dario Fertilio, 'Malga Porzûs, il risveglio della sinistra', *Il Corriere della Sera*, 8 August 1997, p. 3.
24. Gabriele Polo, 'Nazionalismo: una bevanda avvelenata', *Il Manifesto*, 24 August 1997, p. 24.
25. Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'Lettera a Luciano Serra of 21 August 1945', *Il Corriere della Sera*, 8 August 1997.
26. Morando Morandini, '*Porzûs*: blasfemo o solo mediocre?', *Il Resto del Carlino*, 18 September 1997.
27. Emiliano Perra, 'Legitimizing Fascism through the Holocaust? The Reception of the Miniseries *Perlasca: un Eroe Italiano* in Italy', *Memory Studies*, 3:2 (2010) 95–109.
28. *Corriere della Sera* online, 'Oltre 10 milioni di telespettatori per le foibe', 2 February 2008.
29. Martinelli, *Libero*, 4 February 2007.
30. Davide Rodogno, *Il Nuovo Ordine Mediterraneo* (Turin: Bollati Borlinghieri, 2003).
31. *La Repubblica*, 'Foibe, la fiction delle polemiche', 2 February 2005.
32. *La Repubblica*, 'Fiction su foibe, Gasparri insiste: "Grave è quando si dimentica" ', 28 January 2005.
33. Clauda Fusani, 'Foibe, AN fa sua la fiction. Gasparri firma l'invito RAI', *La Repubblica*, 28 January 2005.
34. Sebastiano Messina, 'Passerella di AN per le foibe: e la fiction diventa un trofeo', *La Repubblica*, 29 January 2005.
35. Ilaria Falcone, '*Il Sangue dei Vinti* di Michele Soavi: la storia decolarata', *NonSoloCinema*, 7 May 2009.
36. Alessandro Fracassi (ed.), *Il Sangue dei Vinti: Pressbook*, Festa del Cinema di Roma, 22–31 October 2008.
37. Claudia Morgoglione, 'Tutti gli orrori dei partigiani nel film più discusso del Festival', *La Repubblica*, 26 October 2008.
38. Fracassi (ed.), *Il Sangue dei Vinti: Pressbook*, 2008.
39. Ferruccio Gattuso, '*Il Sangue dei Vinti* promosso. Il pubblico cerca la storia vera', *Il Giornale*, 3 October 2010.
40. Paolo Conti, '*Il Sangue dei Vinti* spacca anche la platea', *Il Corriere della Sera*, 28 October 2008.
41. Gattuso, *Il Giornale*, 3 October 2010.
42. *La Repubblica*, '*Cefalonia* vince la sfida del lunedì', 12 April 2005.

3 Neorealist Catharses

1. Mario Gromo, *Film Visti* (Roma: Edizioni Bianco e Nero, 1957). Source: 'Rassegna Stampa' on *Roma Città Aperta*, Library of the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, Roma.
2. Marcus cites Communist critic Pio Baldelli's 1969 critique of 'the fairy tale of national agreement'; Millicent Marcus, *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986) 53, note 29. But, even at the film's release, some Catholic press like *Il Popolo* and *L'Osservatore Romano* showed concern for the film's graphic representation of torture, and the

daily paper of the social-democratic *Partito d'Azione* wrote: 'This first Italian film [. . .] should be the founder of a new cinematography. We must instead hope that this will not pass and that this work will remain as a misdirected experiment, destined not to be imitated. The subject of this film, so painfully close to us, still causes too many personal reactions in each of us [. . .] to be analysed with the necessary composure.' B. Ban, *L'Italia Libera*, Rome edition, 25 September 1945.

3. *Il Giornale del Mattino* (*Il Messaggero*), 25 September 1945.
4. Callisto Cosulich (ed.), *Storia del Cinema Italiano Vol. VII, 1945–48* (Venice: Marsilio, 2003) 609.
5. To contextualise the film's commercial result, it is also worth pointing out that in 1945–46 Italian films accounted for 11.9% of the works in circulation, in a market nearly three-quarters dominated (73.3%) by American films; *Ibid*. 608.
6. Cap. Klaus Mann, *The Stars and Stripes, Mediterranean ed.*, August 1945.
7. David Platt, 'Of Men Who Fought Fascism', *Daily Worker,* 26 February 1946, pp. 11–13.
8. Viva, 'The Current Cinema', *New Yorker*, 2 March 1946, p. 81.
9. Maurice Schérer (aka Eric Rohmer), 'Genie du Christianisme (on *Europa '51*)', *Cahiers du Cinéma,* 25 July 1953.
10. See chiefly the section 'An Aesthetic of Reality: Cinematic Realism and the Italian School of the Liberation' and Neorealism',) and 'In Defense of Rossellini' in André Bazin, *What Is Cinema?*, vol. 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) 16–40, 93–101.
11. Rivette's 'Lettre sur Rossellini', originally from *Cahiers du Cinéma* 46, April 1955, and other notable French essays and interviews with Rossellini from the 1950s have been edited in English translation in Jim Hillier (ed.), *Cahiers du Cinéma*. *The 1950s: Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985) 175–217.
12. 'I do not ignore the part of more or less conscious political ability that is undoubtedly hidden behind this communicative generosity. It may be that tomorrow the priest of *Roma Città Aperta* will no longer relate as effortlessly with the former Communist partisan.' André Bazin, *Che Cos'è il Cinema* (Milan: Garzanti, 1996) 281, note 1.
13. Gian Piero Brunetta, *Il Cinema Neorealista Italiano* (Bari: Laterza, 2009) 35–50.
14. Peter Bondanella, *Italian Cinema from Neorealism to the Present* (New York: Continuum, 1991) 37–42.
15. Marcus, *Italian Film* (1986) 33–53.
16. Christopher Wagstaff, *Italian Neorealist Cinema: An Aesthetic Approach* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007) 94–184.
17. David Forgacs, *Rome, Open City* (London: British Film Institute, 2000).
18. Sidney Gottlieb (ed.), *Roberto Rossellini's Rome Open City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
19. Brunetta, *Cinema Neorealista* (2009) 15.
20. 'La Religione del Mio Tempo', in Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Le Poesie* (Milan: Garzanti, 1975) 189. Also cited in Gian Piero Brunetta, 'Il cinema come storia', in Gian Piero Brunetta et al. (eds), *La Cinepresa e la Storia* (Cremona: Edizioni Scolastiche Bruno Mondadori, 1985) 54.

21. Arguably the best work on Rossellini as filmmaker is David Forgacs, Sarah Lutton and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (eds), *Roberto Rossellini: Magician of the Real* (London: British Film Institute, 2000).
22. On the coexistence of these elements in Anna Magnani's Pina see Marga Cottino-Jones, *Women, Desire and Power in Italian Cinema* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) 54–9; and Marcia Landy, 'Diverting Clichés: Femininity, Masculinity, Melodrama, and Neorealism in Open City', in Gottlieb (ed.), *Rome Open City* (2004) 85–105.
23. Henri Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991) 17–18.
24. See Alessandro Portelli, *The Order Has Been Carried Out: History, Memory and Meaning of a Nazi Massacre in Rome* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). The trial and execution of Pietro Caruso was filmed by Luchino Visconti and later formed part of his documentary *Giorni di Gloria* (*Days of Glory*, 1945) produced with Giuseppe De Santis, Mario Serandrei and Marcello Pagliero. For a different approach to the massacre, see also Giacomo Debenedetti's superb 1946 essay 'Otto Ebrei', in *16 Ottobre 1943* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1993) 67–96.
25. Marcus, *Italian Film* (1986) 37.
26. Paul Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia dal Dopoguerra a Oggi I* (Turin: Einaudi, 1989) 69–75.
27. Kay Gladstone, 'Separate Intentions: The Allied Screening of Concentration Camp Documentaries in Defeated Germany in 1945–46: *Death Mills* and *Memory of the Camps*', in Toby Haggith and Joanna Newman (eds), *The Holocaust and the Moving Image: Representations in Film and Television Since 1933* (London: Wallflower Press, 2005) 50–64. For a broader discussion see also Mary Fulbrook, *German National Identity After the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999).
28. Alan Davies, 'The First Radio War: Broadcasting in the Spanish Civil War, 1936–1939', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 19:4 (1999) 493–5.
29. Pope Pius XI, 'Allocuzione di S.S. Pio XI ai professori e agli studenti dell'Università Cattolica del sacro Cuore di Milano', *Vogliamo Anzitutto*, 13 febbraio 1929, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/speeches/documents/hf_p-xi_spe_19290213_vogliamo-anzitutto_it.html (accessed 24 January 2013).
30. Victor Emmanuel III finally abdicated the throne in favour of his son Umberto II on 9 May 1946, before the 2 June 1946 referendum which would sanction Italy's Republican Constitution and the family's exile, which lasted until 2002. See Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia* (1989) 128–38. See also the rigorous and vivid rendition of the Monarch's behaviour at the Armistice in Philip Morgan, *The Fall of Mussolini* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); 93–126.
31. Benedetto Croce, *Scritti e Discorsi Politici (1943–47),* 2 vols. (Bari: Laterza, 1963) 1: 7–16, 56, and 2: 46–50, 361–2. See also David Roberts, *Benedetto Croce and the Uses of Historicism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, Berkeley University Press, 1987).
32. Brunetta, *Cinema Neorealista* (2009) 35.
33. *Ibid.* 15.

34. *Paisà* earned 100,300,000 Lire at the box office: Roberto Poppi (ed.), *Dizionario del Cinema Italiano: i Film Vol. II* (Roma: Gremese, 2007) 313. The film came ninth among Italian films of that year; Cosulich (ed.) *Storia del Cinema* (2003) 608.
35. Pasolini, *Le Poesie* (1975) 199; also cited in Brunetta et al., *La Cinepresa* (1985) 56.
36. Wagstaff, *Neorealist Cinema* (2007) 277–78.
37. Brunetta, *Cinema Neorealista* (2009) 38.
38. Carlo Lizzani, *Il Cinema Italiano* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1992) 95.
39. 'La lettera di Rossellini', *L'Unità*, 9 September 1959, p. 1.
40. See, for example, essays by Lubica Učnik on Czechoslovakia (54–71), Moinak Biswas on India (72–90), Antonio Napolitano on Britain (111–27), and Antonio Traverso on Brazil (165–86), in Laura E. Ruberto and Kristi M. Wilson (eds), *Italian Neorealism and Global Cinema* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2007).

4 Luigi Zampa: Fascism and *italianità*

1. *Vivere in Pace* earned 126,600,000 Lire at the box office. Roberto Poppi (ed.), *Dizionario del Cinema Italiano: i Film II* (Roma: Gremese, 2007) 483.
2. *Anni Difficili* earned 294,600,000 Lire at the box office. Poppi (ed.), *Dizionario del Cinema II* (2007) 43–4.
3. *Anni Facili* earned 401,000,000 Lire at the box office. Poppi (ed.), *Dizionario del Cinema II* (2007) 44.
4. *L'Arte di Arrangiarsi* earned 257,700,000 Lire at the box office. Poppi (ed.), *Dizionario del Cinema II* (2007) 49.
5. *Anni Ruggenti* earned 490,000,000 Lire at the box office. Roberto Poppi and Mario Pecorari (eds), *Dizionario del Cinema Italiano: i Film III, A-L* (Roma: Gremese, 2007) 50.
6. Opening voice-over of *Anni Difficili*, extract from Vitaliano Brancati, *Il Vecchio con gli Stivali e Altri Racconti* (Milan: Bompiani, 1946).
7. Barbara Rosenwein, 'Problems and Methods in the History of Emotions', *Passions in Context – International Journal for the History and Theory of Emotions* 1:1 (2010) 1–33. See also Jan Plamper, 'The History of Emotions: An Interview with William Reddy, Barbara Rosenwein, and Peter Stearns', *History and Theory* 49:2 (2010): 237–65.
8. The word *qualunquista* refers to a political party, *L'Uomo Qualunque* (The Ordinary Man), which grouped together former Fascists and other non-Catholic conservatives around a populist agenda against Communism, Capitalism and state intervention in private lives. The party would disappear in the 1950s, splitting between the Monarchists and the new, neofascist MSI. Consequently, the word *qualunquista* came to signify a person who uses an apathetic and anti-political discourse to disguise a fundamentally reactionary political stance.
9. 'Revisione Cinematografica Definitiva: Appunto, 18 August 1948', *Anni Difficili* folder; files of the Ufficio di Revisione Cinematografica, Direzione Generale dello Spettacolo, Ministero dei Beni Culturali, Rome.

10. Censorship Visa 4481 (reverse), 25 September 1948, *Anni Difficili* folder; files of the Ufficio di Revisione Cinematografica, Direzione Generale per lo Spettacolo, Ministero dei Beni Culturali, Rome.
11. See Franco Vigni, 'Censura a largo spettro', in Luciano De Giusti (ed.), *Storia del Cinema Italiano VIII, 1949–53* (Venice: Marsilio, 2003) 64–79.
12. Mino Argentieri, *La Censura nel Cinema Italiano* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1974) 68–9.
13. See Gian Piero Brunetta, *Storia del Cinema Italiano III, dal Neorealismo al Miracolo Economico* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 2001) 73–126.
14. Giulio Andreotti's answer to a Parliamentary question by Senators Giuseppe Magliano, Mario Cingolani, Giovanni Persico and Emilio Battista, 27 November 1948. *Atti Parlamentari del Senato della Repubblica. 1948. Discussioni III*. 27 October–21 December 1948, 4020–3.
15. Censorship Visa 15009, 26 September 1953, *Anni Facili* folder; files of the Ufficio di Revisione Cinematografica, Direzione Generale per lo Spettacolo, Ministero dei Beni Culturali, Rome.
16. 'Lei come rappresentante ha pieni poteri?' to 'Lei, come rappresentante ha la delega?' 'Una delega, ma sicuro!'
17. Censorship Visa 15009, 20 October 1953, *Anni Facili* folder; files of the Ufficio di Revisione Cinematografica, Direzione Generale per lo Spettacolo, Ministero dei Beni Culturali, Rome.
18. Amilcare Locatelli, PSI, question to the President of the Council of Ministers, 18 November 1953. *Atti Parlamentari del Senato della Repubblica. 1953. Discussioni II*. 19 October–19 December 1953. 2270.
19. Giambattista Madia, MSI, question to the President of the Council of Ministers, 6 April 1954. *Atti Parlamentari della Camera dei Deputati. II Legislatura, 1954. Discussioni VII*. 23 March–12 April 1954. 6808.
20. Maurizio Zinni, *Fascisti di Celluloide*, (Venice: Marsilio, 2010) 61–2.
21. Jaures Busoni, PSI, question to the President of the Council of Ministers, 27 September 1957. *Atti Parlamentari del Senato della Repubblica. II Legislatura, 1953–7. Discussioni XXV*. 24 September–25 October 1957. 23595.
22. Censorship Visa 15009, 7 June 1956, *Anni Facili* folder; files of the Ufficio di Revisione Cinematografica, Direzione Generale per lo Spettacolo, Ministero dei Beni Culturali, Rome.
23. For an example of Catholic dismissal on moral grounds see Nino Ghelli, 'Arte e non arte nel "55", *Rivista del Cinematografo* 28:12 (1955), 16–9; for an example of left-wing dismissal on political grounds see G.T., '*L'Arte di Arrangiarsi*', *Filmcritica* 9:47–8 (1955) 186–7.
24. With a controversial new electoral law, similar to the one passed by Mussolini in 1924, the Christian Democrats attempted to obtain an absolute majority through a decisive electoral bonus for the largest coalition. The ensuing campaign, fought on the legitimacy of the *legge truffa* (fraud law) as it became known, was as intense as the 1948 election's. See Paul Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia dal dopoguerra a oggi I* (Turin: Einaudi, 1989) 188–92.
25. Aristarco and Renzi were arrested on 10 September 1953 for publishing Renzi's screenplay on the Italian army in Greece. Renzo Renzi, 'Il processo s'agapò', in De Giusti (ed.), *Storia del Cinema VIII* (2003) 70–1. In the same volume see also the reproduction of original documents from the 1953–54 trial, pp. 567–80.

26. Censorship Visa 17853, 22 December 1954, *L'Arte di Arrangiarsi* folder; files of the Ufficio di Revisione Cinematografica, Direzione Generale per lo Spettacolo, Ministero dei Beni Culturali, Rome.
27. Letter from Dr Jannotto, President of Documento Film to Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri: Direzione Generale dello Spettacolo, 28 December 1954. *L'Arte di Arrangiarsi* folder; files of the Ufficio di Revisione Cinematografica, Direzione Generale per lo Spettacolo, Ministero dei Beni Culturali, Rome.
28. First version of the script, signed Brancati and dated 22 September 1954, pp. 185–6; the sentence is gone from the second version of the script, signed Anelli and dated 22 January 1955, pp. 157–8. *L'Arte di Arrangiarsi* folder. Files of the Ufficio di Revisione Cinematografica, Direzione Generale per lo Spettacolo, Ministero dei Beni Culturali, Rome.
29. Brancati (1954) 199–200; in Anelli (1955), the scene is still there with the note '*abolito*' (abolished) handwritten next to it. *L'Arte di Arrangiarsi* folder; files of the Ufficio di Revisione Cinematografica, Direzione Generale per lo Spettacolo, Ministero dei Beni Culturali, Rome.
30. Brancati (1954) 242; Anelli (1955) 83; the further changes appear in a third version of the dialogue, signed Rulli and dated 22 August 1955. All three scripts are stored in: *L'Arte di Arrangiarsi* folder; files of the Ufficio di Revisione Cinematografica, Direzione Generale per lo Spettacolo, Ministero dei Beni Culturali, Rome.
31. Edoardo Bruno, 'Il conformismo di casa nostra', and Rudi Berger and Piero Gadda Conti '*Anni Facili*', *Filmcritica* 6:22 (1953) 95–7, 131–2.
32. Emilio Sereni, *Vie Nuove*, cited in Callisto Cosulich, '*Anni Difficili*: film politicamente scorretto', in Callisto Cosulich (ed.), *Storia del Cinema Italiano Vol. VII, 1945–48* (Venice: Marsilio, 2003) 222–3.
33. Tatti Sanguineti, 'Di Nuovo *Anni Difficili*', contained in the extras of *Briguglio Films: Anni Difficili and Quel Fantasma di Mio Marito*, DVD Box Set, 2009. The text of Calvino's review is published in the booklet that accompanies the DVD.
34. Alfredo Panicucci, *Avanti!*, 5 September 1948.
35. Lorenzo Quaglietti, *L'Unità*, 20 October 1948.
36. Vitaliano Brancati, *Anni Difficili*, Venezia 1948 IX Mostra Internazional dell'Arte Cinematografica (Pressbook), 1948. Source: Biblioteca Chiarini, Fondazione Scuola Nazionale di Cinema, Rome.
37. Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia* (1989) 157–9.
38. Antonio Gramsci, *La questione meridionale* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 2005)
39. Alberto Moravia, 'Zampa scivola tra le maglie della censura', *L'Europeo* 35, 23 August 1953, 12–13.

5 Clueless Fascists and Accidental Anti-Fascists

1. See *L'Unità*, 6 March 1953, pp. 1–5, 7. Among the epithets used to celebrate 'Stalin's prodigious life for the progress of humanity' (p. 3) were 'chief of all the world's workers' (p. 1), 'indefatigable defender of peace' (pp. 4, 5), 'shining example' (p. 4), defender of Moscow and victor of Stalingrad (p. 4) and even vanquisher of the traitors (p. 5). Page 7 is dedicated to the

outpourings of affection from workers all over the world towards the deceased leader.

2. The PCI's line was to blame the rebellion on counter-revolutionaries, while simultaneously condemning the imperialist Franco-British-Israeli intervention in Egypt. Adriana Castellani, 'Scontri nelle vie dì Budapest provocati da gruppi armati di contro-rivoluzionari', *L'Unità*, 24 October 1956, p. 1; the paper also welcomed the Red Army's tanks in Budapest: Orfeo Vangelista, 'Le truppe sovietiche intervengono in Ungheria per porre fine all'anarchia ed al terrore bianco' (Soviet troops intervene in Hungary), *L'Unità*, 5 November 1956, p. 1.
3. Perhaps the most public example of dissent from the party line was the *Manifesto* supporting the revolution signed on 29 October 1956 by a group of 101 left-wing intellectuals; see Fertilio Dario, 'La rivolta dei 101 Invasione dell' Ungheria: Lucio Colletti racconta come nacque il manifesto', *Il Corriere della Sera*, 22 September 2006, p. 53. On 1956 as a watershed in the history of the PCI see Paul Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia dal Dopoguerra a Oggi I* (Turin: Einaudi, 1989) 275–81.
4. These data refer to the period 1946–92, from the first Republican cabinet (De Gasperi II) to Carlo Azeglio Ciampi's 1992 government, the last before the formal dissolution of the DC. Source: Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri,'I governi italiani dal '43 a oggi', http://www.governo.it/governo/governi/governi.html (Accessed 24 January 2013)
5. The expression *governo balneare*, which I have translated here as 'seaside cabinet', came to signify a hasty reshuffle, before the August parliamentary break, that was designed to buy a fractious majority some time to rediscuss government composition.
6. Mino Argentieri, *La Censura nel Cinema Italiano* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1974) 152–7. Argentieri quotes Giorgio Nelson Page, the American Fascist veteran we have encountered in Chapter 4: 'if Italy were to become Communist, *La dolce vita* would figure in the new museum of the revolution' (p. 153).
7. On the bloody days of the Tambroni government see Paul Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia dal Dopoguerra a Oggi II* (Turin: Einaudi, 1989) 344–9. See also Guido Crainz, *Il Paese Mancato: dal Miracolo Economico agli Anni Ottanta* (Roma: Donzelli, 2005) 96–9.
8. Lino Micciché, *Cinema Italiano: gli Anni '60 e Oltre* (Venice: Marsilio, 1995) 47.
9. Zinni comes to 25: Maurizio Zinni, *Fascisti di Celluloide* (Venice: Marsilio, 2010) 102.
10. For a rare thematic analysis of the revival of the historical film in this period see Pasquale Iaccio, 'Il cinema rilegge cent'anni di storia italiana', in Giorgio De Vincenti (ed.), *Storia del Cinema Italiano X, 1960–4* (Venice: Marsilio, 2001) 191–206. For useful commentaries on a vast number of individual films, including many not mentioned here, see Zinni, *Fascisti* (2010) 99–161.
11. Stephen Gundle, 'The "Civic Religion" of the Resistance in postwar Italy', *Modern Italy*, 5:2 (2000) 126–7.
12. Lino Micciché has been particularly scathing about the war and Resistance-themed films of this period, complaining how 'the critical analysis of Nazi-Fascism was replaced by a satire of Fascist *mores* [dominated by] the iconoclastic scepticism of Roman popular culture and the tradition of the vernacular sketch'; Lino Micciché, *Cinema italiano* (1995) 47–8.

13. See Giacomo Lichtner, *Film and the Shoah in France and Italy* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008) 47–56, for a comprehensive analysis of this film and its reception.
14. Stephen Gundle, 'Television in Italy', in James A. Coleman and Brigitte Rollet (eds), *Television in Europe* (Exeter: Intellect Books, 1997) 61–76; specifically on television and the Economic Miracle see also Stephen Gundle, 'L'americanizzazione del quotidiano: television e consumismo nell'Italia degli anni cinquanta', *Quaderni Storici*, 21:62 (1986) 561–94 and John Foot, 'Television and the City: The Impact of Television in Milan, 1954–1960', *Contemporary European History*, 8:3 (1999) 379–94.
15. Zinni, *Fascisti* (2010) 170–2.
16. Lichtner, *Film and the Shoah* (2008) 56–8.
17. Thomas Cragin, 'Making Fascism into Anti-Fascism: The Political Transformation of *Tiro al Piccione*', *Film and History*, 38:2 (2008) 11–20. This is a rare critical treatment of Montaldo's film, which is also briefly but insightfully discussed in Zinni, *Fascisti* (2010) 121–4.
18. According to Poppi and Pecorari, *Tiro al Piccione* earned 342,000,000 Lire, although Zinni cites the slightly lower figure of 317,596,398. Either number ranked the film 50th among the season's releases. See Roberto Poppi and Mario Pecorari, *Dizionario del Cinema Italiano: I Film III**, M/Z* (Rome: Gremese, 2007) 302, and Zinni, *Fascisti* (2010) 122.
19. Iaccio, 'Il cinema rilegge', in De Vincenti (ed.), *Storia del Cinema* (2001) 197.
20. *Ibid.*
21. On the transition from a Fascist masculinity to a postwar one, with particular reference to Alberto Lattuada's *Il Bandito* (*The Bandit*, 1946), see Ruth Ben-Ghiat, 'Unmaking the Fascist Man: Masculinity, Film and the Transition from Dictatorship', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 10:3 (2005) 336–65.
22. The PCI, the CLN and the Allies are not once mentioned, but neither are Hitler, Mussolini, or the German troops who had been in Ferrara since late 1942. The absence of PCI is particularly interesting, however, as Vancini would later direct *Le Stagioni del Nostro Amore* (*Seasons of Our Love*, 1966), about a Communist intellectual in crisis after the denunciation of Stalin's crimes; perhaps in Vancini's own disaffection we might find the reason for his disillusionment with the politicised memory of the Resistance.
23. Luciano Quaglietti, 'Il pericolo di prendere lucciole per lanterne', *Cinema 60*, 5 (1960) 15.
24. Staged in 1950, and remade for TV in 1960, De Filippo's *Napoli Milionaria* exploits a symbolic association between the febrile night that has to pass for the protagonist's sick daughter (as in many other crucial nights, from Jane Austen to Louisa May Alcott) and Italy's night. De Filippo utters the oft-cited '*ha da passa*' '*a nuttata*', which literally means 'the night has to pass.'
25. Sandro Scandolara, 'La resistenza oggi: un rapporto morale con la storia', *Cineforum*, 52 (1966) 146.
26. *Ibid.*, 145.
27. Marco Bongioanni, 'Chiose a trenta film sulla Resistenza', *Rivista del Cinematografo*, 1 (1966) 28.
28. Mario Guidotti, 'Opportunità dei film ispirati al fascismo', *Rivista del Cinematografo*, 3 (March 1962) 84.

29. Cesare De Michelis, 'La resistenza nel cinema degli anni facili', *Cinema 60*, 23–6 (1962) 87.
30. Vito Attolini, 'Fascismo, resistenza e impegno storicistico', *Cinema Nuovo*, 164 (1963) 266.
31. De Michelis, 'La resistenza', (1962) 91.
32. After the success of *Il Generale della Rovere*, which grossed 713,000,000 Lire, the Resistance films of this period continued to be consistently popular. Generally the comedies were the more consistent performers, with films like *Tutti a Casa* (1,171,000,000 L.), *I Due Nemici* (*The Best of Enemies*, Guy Hamilton, 1961: 1,076,000,000 L.), *Il Federale* (832,000,000 L.), *La Marcia su Roma* (741,000,000 L.) and *I Due Marescialli* (505,000,000 L.); however, some dramas were also commercially extremely successful, such as *La Ciociara* (1,163,000,000 L.), or at least middling successes, as in the cases of *La Lunga Notte del 1943* (560,000,000 L.) and even *Kapò* (558,000,000 L.), unusually popular for a Holocaust film. All the figures are sourced from Poppi and Pecorari (eds), *Dizionario del Cinema III* and III*** (2007).
33. Luciano Quaglietti, 'Il pericolo di prendere lucciole per lanterne', *Cinema 60*, 5 (1960) 13.
34. *Ibid*.
35. De Michelis, 'La resistenza' (1962) 89.
36. *Ibid*.
37. De Michelis, 'La resistenza' (1962) 87.
38. Perhaps the most telling example of the self-righteous and dogmatic approach of many critics remains the title with which *L'Unità* welcomed Rossellini and De Sica's 'redemption' and allowed them back into the fold of the enlightened intellectuals: Ugo Casiraghi, 'Con *Il Generale della Rovere* Rossellini e De Sica si riabilitano', *L'Unità*, 30 August 1959, p. 12.

6 *Il Federale*'s Apolitical Commitment

1. *Il Corriere della Sera*, 'Rassegna Cinematografica: *Il Federale*', 21 August 1961, p. 6.
2. Ellebi, '*Il Federale*', *L'Unità*, 17 September 1961, p. 6.
3. Adelio Ferrero, '*Il Federale*', *Cinema Nuovo*, 155 (1962), cited in Roberto Poppi and Mario Pecorari, *Dizionario del Cinema Italiano: I Film III*, A/L* (Rome: Gremese, 2007) 247.
4. Vito Maggiore, 'Scheda: *Il Federale*', Special Issue on 'Fascismo, Antifascismo e Resistenza nel Cinema Italiano dal '45 a Oggi', *Novità in Cinenteca: Fogli Informativi della Cineteca Regionale Arci-Emilia Romagna, Speciale Scuola*, 12 (1981) 17.
5. The ideological charge of the language would suit internal party documents from the 1950s and is astonishing in a piece of educational literature. The issue's main article chastises not only Rossellini as 'inter-classist and moralist' (p. 5), but also Vergano's *Il Sole Sorge Ancora* as a 'meta-misunderstanding built on militant paternalism and generical humanitarianism' and Lizzani's *Achtung Banditi* – hardly a challenge to the orthodox Communist reading of the Resistance – for 'the damaging fraternisation between classes, between bosses and workers'. Giovanni Figuera, 'L'avventura dei silenzi', Special Issue, *Novità in Cinenteca* (1981) 4–21.

6. Lino Micciché, *Cinema Italiano: gli Anni '60 e Oltre* (Venice: Marsilio, 1995) 49.
7. *Ibid*. 50.
8. *Ibid*.
9. *Ibid*.
10. On reception studies see Janet Staiger, *Perverse Spectators: The Practices of Film Reception* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).
11. Andrea Mariuzzo, 'The Training and Education of Propagandists in the "repubblica dei partiti": Internal-Circulation Periodicals in the PCI and the DC (1946–58)', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 16:1 (2011) 97. Campaign posters, such as the PCI's 1953 'Un consiglio ai forchettoni – Contro il logorio della campagna elettorale bevete Cynar – Elettori! Contro il logorio di 5 anni di malgoverno DC votate PCI', are invaluable primary sources now digitised and held at www.manifestipolitici.it (accessed 24 January 2013).
12. 'Silent and invisible the submarines set off! Hearts and engines of the storm troopers against the immensity!'.
13. The translation is by Bob Lowe, with Marco Sonzogni.
14. See, for example, the editorial piece 'Il cinema e la Resistenza', *Cinema Nuovo*, 57 (1955) 287. 'We have always believed,' the editors jointly wrote, 'and we argue it again in opening this 25 April issue, that if the Resistance resists so Italian cinema will resist.'
15. Translation by Bob Lowe, with Marco Sonzogni.

7 The Sins of the Fathers

1. On the role of consumerism in changing society and gender in republican Italy see Paolo Scrivano, 'Signs of Americanization in Italian Domestic Life: Italy's Postwar Conversion to Consumerism', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 40:2 (2005) 317–40; and John Foot, 'The Family and the "Economic Miracle": Social Transformation, Work, Leisure and Development at Bovisa and Comasina (Milan), 1950–70', *Contemporary European History*, 4:3, Special Issue: 'The European Family and Politics' (1995) 315–38. On the washing machine specifically see Enrica Asquer, *La Rivoluzione Candida. Storia Sociale della Lavatrice in Italia (1945–1970)* (Rome: Carocci, 2007); a similar experience of alienation and de-socialisation, but also reflecting the complexity of that transition, was the arrival of the supermarket, discussed in Emanuela Scarpellini, 'Shopping American-Style: The Arrival of the Supermarket in Postwar Italy', *Enterprise & Society*, 5:4 (2004) 625–68.
2. On patterns of Italian internal migration, approached with the customary comprehension of socio-economic and cultural factors, see Paul Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia dal Dopoguerra a Oggi II* (Turin: Einaudi, 1989) 293–304. Interesting case studies of the interaction between class, regional and national identities are John Foot, 'Migration and the "Miracle"' at Milan. The Neighbourhoods of Baggio, Barona, Bovisa and Comasina in the 1950s and 1960s', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 10:2 (1997) 184–213; and Enrica Capussotti, 'Nordisti Contro Sudisti: Internal Migration and Racism in Turin, Italy: 1950s and 1960s', *Italian Culture*, 28:2 (2010) 121–38.
3. On 1968 in Italy see Sidney Tarrow, *Democracy and Disorder: Protest and Politics in Italy, 1965–75* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989). For a comparative analysis see Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert and Detlef Junker (eds), *1968: The*

World Transformed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and Piero Ortoleva, *I Movimenti del '68 in Europa e in America* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1998).

4. In the vast literature on 1968, two recent oral history articles stand out in this respect: Stuart J. Hilwig, '"Are You Calling Me a Fascist?": A Contribution to the Oral History of the 1968 Italian Student Rebellion', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 36:4 (2001) 581–97; and Rebecca Clifford, 'Emotions and Gender in Oral History: Narrating Italy's 1968', *Modern Italy*, 17:2 (2012) 209–21. See also John Foot, *Fratture d'Italia* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2009) 372–402.
5. Luisa Passerini, *Autobiography of a Generation: Italy 1968* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1996).
6. To understand de Gaulle's place in linking, figuratively and literally, the memory of World War Two, Algeria and 1968 see Henri Rousso's seminal *The Vichy Syndrome* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991) 60–100. Also on French memory and 1968 see Richard J. Golsan, 'The Legacy of World War Two in France: Mapping the Discourses of Memory', in Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner and Claudio Fogu (eds), *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006) 73–101.
7. Anne Fuchs, 'The Tinderbox of Memory: Generation and Masculinity in *Väterliteratur* by Christoph Meckel, Uwe Timm, Ulla Hahn, and Dagmar Leupold', in Anne Fuchs, Mary Cosgrove and Georg Grote (eds), *German Memory Contests: The Quest for Identity in Literature, Film and Discourse since 1990* (Rochester: Camden House, 2006) 41–66.
8. On West German memories see Robert G. Moeller, 'What Has "Coming to Terms with the Past" Meant in Post-World War II Germany? From History to Memory to the "History of Memory" ', *Central European History*, 35:2 (2002) 223–56; and Wulf Karsteiner, 'Losing the War, Winning the Memory Battle: The Legacy of Nazism, World War Two and the Holocaust in the Federal Republic of Germany', in Lebow et al. (eds), *Politics of Memory* (2006) 102–46.
9. On the interaction of memories of World War Two, 1968 and political and national identities see Richard S. Esbenshade, 'Remembering to Forget: Memory, History, National Identity in Postwar East-Central Europe', *Representations*, 49, Special Issue: 'Identifying Histories: Eastern Europe Before and After 1989' (1995) 72–96; and Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, 'Gender and the Construction of Wartime Heroism in Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union', *European History Quarterly*, 39:3 (2009) 465–89.
10. In 1968, only 11 per cent of men and 26 per cent of women attended Church regularly. Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia* (1989) 332–4.
11. Percy Allum, 'Voting in Naples, 1946–68: A Framework and Two Analyses', *Comparative Politics* 7:1 (1974) 87–108. On the Mafia's relationship with politics, see Paul Ginborg, *Italy and its Discontents* (London: Allen Lane, 2001) 97–102; 205–12.
12. Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia* (1989) 349–58; 362–9.
13. *Ibid*., 478–82.
14. James Hanning, 'The Italian Radical Party and the "New Politics" ', *West European Politics*, 4:3 (1981) 267–81.
15. Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia* (1989) 485–90.
16. The Strategy of Tension is the term used to describe a series of random bomb attacks against public spaces carried out throughout the 1970s by right-wing

extremists with the collusion of deviated members of the secret services. *Ibid*. 450–3. The first comprehensive study of the contested memories of the Strategy of Tension is John Foot, *Italy's Divided Memories* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) 183–203.

17. Martin Clark, *Modern Italy 1871–1995* (Harlow: Longman, 1996) 376–80; see also the full and insightful assessment of the 1968 popular movements in Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia* (1989) 461–9.
18. The best comparative analysis of this European turn is Pierre Sorlin, *European Cinemas/European Societies: 1939–1990* (London: Routledge, 2001) 172–92.
19. Simone Veil, interviewed by *Europe1* radio station, cited in Michel Mohrt, *Le Figaro*, 30 October 1981.
20. On Ophuls's film and its reception see Giacomo Lichtner, *Film and the Shoah in France and Italy* (Edgware: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008) 86–123; on its relationship with the wider reconsideration of Vichy France in the 1970s see Rousso, *Vichy Syndrome* (1991) 98–131.
21. Eric Rentschler, 'The Use and Abuse of Memory: New German Film and the Discourse of Bitburg', *New German Critique*, 36, Special Issue on *Heimat* (1985) 67–90.
22. For a good survey see Timothy Corrigan, *New German Film. The Displaced Image* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).
23. Roumiana Deltcheva, 'Reliving the Past in Recent East European Cinemas', in Anikó Imre (ed.), *East European Cinemas* (New York: Routledge, 2005) 197–213.
24. See John Orr and Elżbieta Ostrowska (eds), *The Cinema of Andrzej Wajda: The Art of Irony and Defiance* (London: Wallflower Press, 2003); an interesting comparative perspective by an expert on Wajda's political films is Janina Kalkowska, 'The Myth of the Father: Melancholia in the Films of Andrzej Wajda from Poland, Michael Haneke from Austria and Aleksandr Sokurov from Russia', *Studies in European Cinema*, 7:1 (2010) 67–76. On *Ashes and Diamonds*, the best known of Wajda's films, see Paul Coates, *The Red and the White* (London: Wallflower Press, 2005) 16–47.
25. Annette Insdorf, *Indelible Shadows: Film and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 172–5; a very interesting contemporary perspective is Jan Žalman, 'Question Marks on the New Czechoslovak Cinema', *Film Quarterly*, 21:2 (1967) 18–27.
26. On Szabó see Zoltan Dragon, *The Spectral Body: Aspects of the Cinematic Oeuvre of István Szabó* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006); on Hungarian cinema and Judaism see Catherine Portuges, 'Traumatic Memory, Jewish Identity: Remapping the Past in Hungarian Cinema', in Imre (ed.), *East European Cinemas* (2005) 121–34.
27. Insdorf, *Indelible Shadows* (1989) 150–2.
28. David Forgacs, 'Fascism and Anti-fascism Reviewed: Generations, History and Film in Italy after 1968', in Helmut Peitsch, Charles Burdett and Claire Gorrara (eds), *European Memories of the Second World War* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1999) 185–201.
29. Maurizio Zinni, *Fascisti di Celluloide* (Venice: Marsilio, 2010) 189.
30. Ginsborg cites 6,133,000 workers involved in industrial disputes in 1973, up from 4,500,000 the previous year. Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia* (1989) 434.

31. See, for example, Bondanella's discussion of *auteurs* like Visconti and especially Antonioni in *Italian Cinema from Neorealism to the Present* (New York: Continuum, 1991) 196–228.
32. Carlo Levi, *Cristo Si è Fermato a Eboli* (Turin: Einaudi, 1963) 3.
33. The declaration of war was filmed by the Istituto Luce and, with many other newsreels, is now available on the institute's digital archive. Chiara Ottaviano has edited many of these together into a DVD, *Vita Quotidiana Durante il Fascismo 3: un Posto al Sole* (Torino: Cliomedia, 2007), which forms a valuable annotated discussion of Fascist colonialism and the regime's use of cinema. See also Pierre Sorlin, 'A Mirror for Fascism. How Mussolini Used Cinema to Advertise His Person and Regime', *The Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 27:1 (2007) 111–17.
34. However, Bondanella argues that Bertolucci is aware of an insurmountable class distance which frames him alongside his bourgeois, rather than his proletarian, characters, believing he was 'doomed to make films in an era before the revolution.' Bondanella, *Italian Cinema* (1991) 314.
35. Lichtner, *Film and the Shoah* (2008) 129. See also Insdorf's perceptive analysis in *Indelible Shadows* (1989) 117–20.
36. Lichtner, *Film and the Shoah* (2008) 134–5.
37. Peter Bondanella, *The Films of Federico Fellini* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 117–39.
38. Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', *Representations*, 26, Special Issue: 'Memory and Counter-Memory' (1989) 7–24.
39. Lichtner, *Film and the Shoah* (2008) 151–4.
40. Insdorf, *Indelible Shadows* (1989) 126.
41. *Pasqualino Settebellezze* earned Wertmüller an Oscar nomination, the first for a woman director. Gabrielle Lucantonio, 'L'altra metà dello schermo: Lina Wertmüller', in Flavio De Bernardinis (ed.), *Storia del Cinema Italiano XII, 1970–6* (Venice: Marsilio, 2008) 133–40.
42. Lino Micciché, *Cinema Italiano: gli Anni '60 e Oltre* (Venice: Marsilio, 1995) 181.
43. Documents on the history of *Salò*'s censorship are collated in De Bernardinis (ed.), *Storia del Cinema* (2008) 595–605.
44. For a comprehensive analysis see Gary Indiana, *Salò: or the 120 days of Sodom* (London, British Film Institute: 2000); on Pasolini see Robert Gordon, *Pasolini: Forms of Subjectivity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).
45. A useful starting point for the comparative analysis of Fascism in the three films is Patrick Cavaliere, 'Contemporary Italian Cinema and Fascism: Memory, History and Politics in the Films of Bernardo Bertolucci', *Post-Scriptum.ORG*, 4 (2004) 1–24.
46. Christopher Wagstaff, 'The Construction of Point of View in Bertolucci's *Il Conformista*', *The Italianist*, 3 (1983) 64–71.
47. Christopher Wagstaff, 'Forty-seven Shots of Bertolucci's *Il Conformista*', *The Italianist*, 2 (1982) 76–101.
48. The reference to Renoir is significant in the film not only as a stylistic statement but also as a political one, signalling Bertolucci's abandonment of Jean-Luc Godard – whose name and even Parisian address are taken on by the murdered professor in the film – for Renoir. *Ibid*. 78, 91.
49. *Ibid*. 92.

50. For a comprehensive analysis of this film see Eugenio Bolongaro, 'Why Truth Matters: Ideology and Ethics in Bertolucci's *The Spider's Stratagem*', *Italian Culture*, 23 (2005) 71–96.
51. On the role of the father in Bertolucci's two 1970 films, and more generally for an acute recent contribution to the much-studied issue of gender and the Oedipal myth in Bertolucci, see Sergio Rigoletto, 'Contesting Memory: Masculine Dilemmas and Oedipal Scenarios in Bernardo Bertolucci's *Strategia del ragno* and *Il Conformista*', *Italian Studies*, 67:1 (2012) 120–42.
52. Bondanella, *Italian Cinema* (1991) 299.
53. Bondanella, *Italian Cinema* (1991) 300.
54. On Bertolucci's manipulation of time, and its significant implications for its overall interpretation as historiophoty, see Frances Flanagan, 'Time, History, and Fascism in Bertolucci's Films', *The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms*, 4:1 (1999) 89–98.
55. Richard Bosworth, 'Bernardo Bertolucci, *1900* and the Myth of Fascism', *European History Quarterly*, 19:37 (1989) 37–61.
56. *Ibid.*, 40.
57. Bosworth, for instance, noted the analogy between the hunchback village fool Rigoletto and Antonio Gramsci, or the metaphor of the Marxist mole reprised in the film. *Ibid*. 41; 45–6.
58. Robert Rosenstone, 'The Historical Film as Real History', *Film-Historia*, 5:1 (1995) 5–23. Here Rosenstone offers the simplest explanation of what he means by historians' 'explicit' and 'implicit' uses of cinema. For ease of access I have here retained his meaning, although I take issue with these definitions, which seem partial and, indeed, counterintuitive and – I would argue – need reversing.
59. Yosefa Loshitzky, ' "Memory of My Own Memory": Processes of Private and Collective Remembering in Bertolucci's *The Spider's Stratagem* and *The Conformist*', *History and Memory*, 3:2 (1991) 87–114.

8 Ettore Scola's Ordinary Day

1. *La Repubblica*, 20 May 1977, p. 1.
2. Fausto De Luca, 'L'accordo è quasi fatto', *La Repubblica*, 21 May 1977, p. 1.
3. Lino Micciché, *Cinema Italiano: gli Anni '60 e Oltre* (Venice: Marsilio, 1995) 386.
4. Tullio Kezich and Andrea Levantesi (eds), *Una Giornata Particolare. Un Film di Ettore Scola. Incontrarsi e Dirsi Addio nella Roma del '38* (Turin: Lindau, 2003).
5. Maurizio Zinni, *Fascisti di Celluloide* (Venice: Marsilio, 2010) 254–6.
6. Millicent Marcus, *Italian Film in the Shadow of Auschwitz* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007) 114; Marcus also analyses Scola's work in depth in her earlier book, *After Fellini: National Cinema in the Postmodern Age* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).
7. Some of the original newsreels are available at the digital archive of the Istituto Luce, at archivioluce.it. See, for instance, 'Fervono i preparativi per la visita di Hitler', 13 April 1938 – B1286; and 'La visita di Hitler in Italia Hitler e Mussolini alla basilica di Massenzio', 11 May 1938 – B1300.

8. See also Luisa Tasca and Stuart Hilwig, 'The "Average Housewife" in Post-World War II Italy', *Journal of Women's History*, 16:2 (2004) 92–115.
9. The outstanding work on women under Fascism is still Victoria de Grazia's superb 1992 book. Specifically on the political use of motherhood, and motherhood as a political act, see Victoria de Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922–1945* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992) 41–76.
10. Bir. [Guglielmo Biraghi], '*Una Giornata Particolare*', *Il Messaggero*, 17 September 1977, p. 9.
11. Giovanni Grazzini, 'Breve incontro sotto il ventennio: il pudico adulterio di due sconfitti', *Il Corriere della Sera*, 20 May 1977, p. 19.
12. Tullio Kezich, '*Una Giornata Particolare*', *La Repubblica*, 20 May 1977, p. 11.
13. For an overview see in particular De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women* (1992) 1–17.
14. Ugo Casiraghi, 'Amaro incontro di due solitudini', *L'Unità*, 20 May 1977, p. 9. Miccichè picked up the image of the two lonelinesses in *Cinema Italiano* (1995) 386.
15. Grazzini, *Corriere*, 20 May 1977.
16. Stefano Reggiani, '*Una Giornata Particolare*', *La Stampa*, 20 May 1977, p. 7.
17. 43′27″: the thunder of the passing planes begins to grow as Antonietta on the doorstep states: 'You are so kind that I get all in a whirl.'
18. 46′01″: Antonietta meanwhile has excused herself and is prettying herself up for her guest.
19. Most scholars agree that such a personal cult existed, although its pervasiveness and nature remain open to debate, for instance in regard to whether the religious template or celebrity culture is the most appropriate key to reading the popular adoration of Mussolini. Among the vast scholarship, see Emilio Gentile, 'Fascism as Political Religion', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 25:2/3 (1990) 229–51; and Stephen Gundle, 'The Death (and Re-birth) of the Hero: Charisma and Manufactured Charisma in Modern Italy', *Modern Italy*, 3:2 (1998) 173–89. On historiographical interpretations of the Duce, see Richard Bosworth, *The Italian Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of Mussolini and Fascism* (London: Arnold, 1998) 58–81.
20. Luisa Passerini, 'The Interpretation of Democracy in the Italian Women's Movement of the 1970s and 1980s', *Women's Studies*, 17:2/3 (1994) 235–9.
21. Grazzini, *Corriere*, 20 May 1977.
22. Gianni Rondolino, 'Il cinema corale di Ettore Scola', in Vito Zagarrio (ed.), S*toria del Cinema Italiano Vol. XIII, 1976–85* (Venice: Marsilio, 2005) 146–51.
23. Giacomo Lichtner, 'The Age of Innocence? Child Narratives and Italian Holocaust Films', *Modern Italy*, 17:2, Special Issue: 'Italy and the Emotions' (2012) 197–208; and Lichtner, 'Allegory, Applicability or Alibi? Historicizing Intolerance in Ettore Scola's Concorrenza Sleale', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 17:1 (2012) 92–105.
24. Bosworth reviews with customary rigor and sarcastic sharpness the long-held view – that of De Felice's *Storia degli Ebrei Sotto il Fascismo*, for example, but also of many less conservative scholars – that Italians rejected Fascist racism, itself little more than a German imposition; Bosworth, *Italian Dictatorship* (1998) 101–5. For recent reconsiderations of this tired template, see Alessandro Visani, 'Italian Reactions to the Racial Laws of 1938 as Seen

through the Classified Files of the Ministry of Popular Culture', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 11:2 (2006) 171–87; Davide Rodogno, 'Italiani brava gente? Fascist Italy's Policy toward the Jews in the Balkans, April 1941–July 1943', *European History Quarterly*, 35:2 (2005) 213–40; and Nick Doumanis, *Myth and Memory in the Mediterranean: Remembering Fascism's Empire* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997).

25. Zinni, *Fascisti di Celluloide* (2010) 255.
26. The concept of 'heritage film', which refers to simultaneous tendencies towards accuracy of reconstruction and nostalgia for an idealised past, is owed to Andrew Higson's work, 'Re-presenting the National Past: Nostalgia and Pastiche in the Heritage Film', in Lester Friedman (ed.), *Fires Were Started: British Cinema and Thatcherism* (St Paul: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) 109–29; later expanded in 'The Heritage Film and British Cinema', in Andrew Higson (ed.), *Dissolving Views: Key Writings on British Cinema* (London: Cassell, 1996) 239–48.

9 Black Shirts, Hearts of Gold: Recurrent Memories

1. Maurizio Zinni, *Fascisti di Celluloide* (Venice: Marsilio, 2010) 265–85.
2. The expression is owed to Rino Formica, himself a leading PSI politician in the 1980s. Pietro Stampa, 'Gli psicologi italiani 1970–2010: dalla rivendicazione istituzionale all' "ansia di conformismo" ', *Rivista di Psicologia Clinica*, 2 (2011) 13.
3. Paul Ginborg, *Italy and Its Discontents* (London: Allen Lane, 2001) 157–62.
4. Between 1976 and 1978, the PCI agreed to abstain on the confidence votes for the Andreotti government; after Moro's murder, in 1978, the PCI formalised their support with a confidence and supply agreement for a further year. Paul Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia dal Dopoguerra a Oggi II* (Turin: Einaudi, 1989) 507–11.
5. Berlinguer's funeral was attended by over a million people. Ginborg, *Discontents* (2001) 159.
6. Zinni, *Fascisti* (2010) 262–3.
7. Applied to a different case study, see Lesley Caldwell's reversal of the motto in 'Is the Political Personal? Fathers and Sons in Bertolucci's *Tragedia di un Uomo Ridicolo* and Amelio's *Colpire al Cuore*', in Anna Cento Bull and Adalgisa Giorgio (eds), *Speaking Out and Silencing: Culture, Society and Politics in Italy in the 1970s* (Oxford: Legenda, 2006) 69–80.
8. Filippo Focardi and Lutz Klinkhammer, 'The Question of Fascist Italy's War Crimes: The Construction of a Self-acquitting Myth (1943–1948)', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 9:3 (2004) 330–48.
9. Claudio Fogu, 'Italiani Brava Gente: the Legacy of Fascist Historical Culture on the Politics of Memory', in Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner and Claudio Fogu (eds), *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006) 147.
10. Battista wrote in reaction to the murder in Iraq of activist Enzo Baldoni, an act, he suggested, that proved the demise of Italy's imagined immunity on the grounds of being *brava gente*; Pierluigi Battista, 'Italiani brava gente. Un mito cancellato', *La Stampa*, 28 August 2004; this passage is also

cited in Angelo Del Boca, *Italiani, Brava Gente?* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza Editore, 2005) 48–9.

11. Del Boca, *Italiani* (2005) 13–55.
12. For Bosworth's rationale, which carries considerable historiographical and political implications, see Richard Bosworth, *The Italian Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of Mussolini and Fascism* (London: Arnold, 1998) 5.
13. Giacomo Lichtner, 'Italian Cinema and the Contested Memories of Fascism: Notes towards a Historical Reconsideration', *Italian Studies in Southern Africa/Studi d'Italianistica nell'Africa Australe*, 24:1 (2011) 6–30.
14. Censorship Visa 15814, 22 March 1954, *Cronache di Poveri Amanti* folder; files of the Ufficio di Revisione Cinematografica, Direzione Generale per lo Spettacolo, Ministero dei Beni Culturali, Rome. Lizzani's film first obtained a visa restricted to persons older than 16 years of age (11 January 1954) and subsequently successfully applied for a revision (5 February 1954).
15. Giovanni Guareschi, 'Civil e la banda (1953)', in *Tutto Don Camillo I* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1998) 546. The short story originally appeared in the collection *Don Camillo e il Suo Gregge* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1953).
16. See Christopher Duggan, *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy since 1796* (London: Longman, 2007) 217–41, 259–73.
17. Jonathan Dunnage, *Twentieth-Century Italy: A Social History* (London: Longman, 2002) 12–18; the significance of Banfield's work is discussed in Paul Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia dal Dopoguerra a Oggi I* (Turin: Einaudi, 1989) x–xi.
18. Bert Cardullo, 'The Children Are Watching Us', *The Hudson Review*, 54:2 (2001) 295–304.
19. Giacomo Lichtner, 'The Age of Innocence? Child Narratives and Italian Holocaust Films', *Modern Italy*, 17:2 (2012) 197–208.
20. Millicent Marcus, *After Fellini: National Cinema in the Postmodern Age* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002) 268–84.
21. Ettore Scola et al., *Concorrenza Sleale*, screenplay manuscript, pp. 105–6; the script is held at Biblioteca Luigi Chiarini, Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, Roma. For an in-depth analysis of the transition from script to film see Giacomo Lichtner, 'Allegory, Applicability or Alibi? Historicizing Intolerance in Ettore Scola's *Concorrenza Sleale*', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 17:1 (2012) 92–105.
22. See Giacomo Lichtner, *Film and the Shoah in France and Italy* (Edgware: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008) 67–77, for a more comprehensive analysis of this film and its reception.
23. On this little-known and seldom discussed but sensitive and interesting film see Marcus, *Italian Film in the Shadow of Auschwitz* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007) 70–2.
24. A recent essay – superb, as much of the book it can be found in – on *Germania Anno Zero* is in Noa Steimatsky, *Italian Locations: Reinhabiting the Past in Postwar Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008) 49–61.
25. Ettore Scola's interview about *Concorrenza Sleale*; Italica RAI, 'Intervista a Ettore Scola', 2001. See the dossier on the film at http://www.italica.rai.it/scheda.php?scheda=concorrenza_intervista (accessed 25 January 2013).
26. Lichtner, 'Allegory, Applicability or Alibi?' (2012) 102.

27. Marcus, who, unlike most historians of Italian cinema, devotes much attention to Ettore Scola's work, offers a rare and perceptive analysis of *Concorrenza Sleale* – which she reads in a much more positive light than I do here – in *Italian Film in the Shadow of Auschwitz* (2007) 111–24.
28. See the vivid and expert reconstruction in Philip Morgan, *The Fall of Mussolini* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) especially 11–33, 85–92.

10 Unexploded Ordnance: Recurrent Amnesias

1. Jay Winter, 'Thinking about Silence', in Efrat Ben-Ze'ev, Ruth Ginio and Jay Winter (eds), *Shadows of War: A Social History of Silence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) 3. Augé's quotation reads: 'Memory is framed by forgetting in the same way that the contours of a shoreline are framed by the sea.'
2. *Ibid*. 3–31.
3. Still the outstanding text on the history of French cinema's uneasy relationship with the Algerian war is Philip Dine, *Images of the Algerian War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994). On the role of silence in remembering Algeria, see Raphaëlle Branche and Jim House, 'Silences on State Violence during the Algerian War of Independence: France and Algeria, 1962–2007' and Ruth Ginio, 'African Silences: Negotiating the Stories of France's Colonial Soldiers, 1914–2009', in Ben-Ze'ev et al. (eds), *Shadows of War* (2010) 115–52.
4. Sylvie Lindeperg, 'L'évaporation du sens de l'Histoire', *Cahiers du Cinéma*, 565 (2002) 50–1.
5. John Foot, *Fratture d'Italia* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2009) 119–96.
6. Richard Bosworth, 'A Country Split in Two? Contemporary Italy and Its Usable and Unusable Pasts', *History Compass*, 4:6 (2006) 1096. Noting the characteristic elusiveness of these figures, Bosworth divides the casualties roughly into 100,000 Libyans and 300,000 Ethiopians.
7. Angelo Del Boca, *Italiani, Brava Gente?* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza Editore, 2005).
8. Ruth Ben-Ghiat, 'Unmaking the Fascist Man: Masculinity, Film and the Transition from Dictatorship', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 10:3 (2005) 339.
9. *Ibid*. 336–65.
10. *Il Deserto della Libia* (Turin: Einaudi, 1951).
11. Giancarlo Fusco, *Guerra d'Albania* (Palermo: Sellerio, 2001).
12. Mario Monicelli, interview with Fabio Fazio, *Che Tempo Che Fa*, RAI Tre, first broadcast on 24 May 2009.
13. Mario Monicelli, 'Interview with Francesca Angeleri', in *Le Rose del Deserto*, DVD (Dolmen Home Video), bonus features, 2′40″–3′00″.
14. *Ibid*. 13′23″–43″.
15. As she does for Scola's films, once again Marcus shows a refreshing degree of curiosity about popular cinema that has been largely overlooked by scholars, as well as the critical insight to take the pulse of such films. Millicent Marcus, *After Fellini: National Cinema in the Postmodern Age* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002) 76–93.
16. Renzo Renzi, 'Il processo s'agapò', in Luciano De Giusti (ed.), *Storia del Cinema Italiano VIII, 1949–53* (Venice: Marsilio, 2003) 71.

17. Maurizio Zinni summarises the war films of this period, which generally enjoyed very good box office results, as simultaneously containing a neo-nationalist discourse and performing an important emotional role for a generation of Italians not easily able to approach their wartime memories in the selective silences of postwar Italy. Maurizio Zinni, *Fascisti di Celluloide* (Venice: Marsilio, 2010) 56–8.
18. Renzo Renzi, 'Il neorealismo nei film di guerra', *Rivista del Cinema Italiano*, 3 (1954), reprinted in Giusti (ed.), *Storia del Cinema VIII* (2003) 621–4.
19. Pietro Grifone and Giorgio Amendola, PCI, question to the President of the Council of Ministers, 3 March 1953. *Atti Parlamentari della Camera dei Deputati. I Legislatura. Discussioni XXXIV*, 1953, p. 46179.
20. Enzo Monteleone, 'Filming History', a lecture delivered for Sources 2: Stimulating Outstanding Resources for Creative European Screenwriting, Sorrento, 12 November 2005, p. 2; http://www.sources2.de/about-sources-2/documentation/lectures.html (accessed 25 January 2013).
21. *Ibid*. p. 6.
22. The expression was used by Eric Hobsbawm to describe the period of the two World Wars. Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914–1991* (London: Penguin, 1994).
23. Review of *Siluri Umani*, in *Cinema Nuovo*, 55 (1955), cited in Zinni, *Fascistidi Celluloide* (2010) 57.
24. Undersecretary of State Giulio Andreotti, answer to question by Grifone and Amendola, *Atti Parlamentari, 1953*, p. 46179.
25. Grifone and Amendola, reply to the Undersecretary's answer, *Ibid*. 46179.
26. Daniela Baratieri, *Memories and Silences Haunted by Fascism: Italian Colonialism MCMXXX-MCMLX* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010) 106–7.
27. O'Healy, Áine, '"[Non] è una Somala": Deconstructing African Femininity in Italian Film', *The Italianist*, 29 (2009) 184; Baratieri, *Memories and Silences* (2010) 107.
28. Baratieri, *Memories and Silences* (2010) 92.
29. Nicola Labanca, *Oltremare: Storia dell'Espansione Coloniale Italiana* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2002).
30. Giuseppe Finaldi, *Italian National Identity in the Scramble for Africa: Italy's African Wars in the Era of Nation-building, 1870–1900* (Bern, Peter Lang, 2009).
31. Nicholas Doumanis, *Myth and Memory in the Mediterranean: Remembering Fascism's Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997).
32. Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller (eds), *Italian Colonialism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).
33. Baratieri, *Memories and Silences* (2010).
34. *Ibid*. 22–4.
35. Gian Piero Brunetta and Jean Gili (eds), *L'Ora d'Africa del Cinema Italiano, 1911–1989* (Rovereto: Materiali di Lavoro, Rivista di Studi Storici, 1990).
36. Liliana Ellena (ed.), *Film d'Africa: Film Italiani Prima,Ddurante e Dopo l'Avventura Coloniale* (Turin: Archivio Nazionale Cinematografico della Resistenza, 1999).

37. Roberta di Carmine, *Italy Meets Africa: Colonial Discourses in Italian Cinema* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011).
38. Baratieri, *Memories and Silences* (2010) 79–138.
39. *Ibid*. 263–82.
40. Richard Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy: Like Under the Dictatorship* (London: Penguin, 2006) 369.
41. See also Bosworth's expert deconstruction of the historiographical orthodoxy around Italian racism in Richard Bosworth, *The Italian Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of Mussolini and Fascism* (London: Arnold, 1998) 96–105.
42. Cesare Pozzo, MSI, question to the President of the Council of Ministers and to the Minister for Tourism and Entertainment, 11 June 1980. *Atti Parlamentari del Senato della Repubblica. Discussioni VIII*, 15 March–18 July 1980, pp. 7260–3.
43. Michele Sartori, 'Pacifisti in tribunale a Trento. "Quel film non dovevano vederlo" ', *L'Unità*, 5 October 1987, p. 3.
44. Andreina De Tommasi, 'Fa ancora paura l'ombra di graziani inviato dal Duce', *La Repubblica*, 7 July 1983, p. 16.
45. Agostino Spataro e Giovanni Giadresco, PCI, question to the Minister for Tourism and Entertainment, 21 January 1982. *Atti Parlamentari della Camera dei Deputati. VIII Legislatura. Discussioni XXXIX*, 21 January–4 February 1982, p. 39379.
46. Agostino Spataro e Giovanni Giadresco, PCI, question to the Minister for Tourism and Entertainment, 20 April 1983. *Atti Parlamentari della Camera dei Deputati. VIII Legislatura. Discussioni LXII*, 11 April–18 May 1983, p. 62686.
47. Mino Argentieri, 'È vietato vedere *Il Leone del Deserto*', *L'Unità*, 15 April 1982, p. 12.
48. Nino Ferrero, 'Arriva in Italia *Il Leone del Deserto?*,' *L'Unità*, 8 July 1983, p. 11.
49. Arminio Savioli, 'Oggi a Tirrenia il *Leone* proibito', *L'Unità*, 10 settembre 1982, p. 1.
50. De Tommasi, *La Repubblica*, 7 July 1983.
51. *La Stampa*, 19 July 1998, p. 23. Whether this broadcast indeed went ahead cannot be established, and there is no sign of any response to it in the press during the following days.
52. Silvia Garambois, 'Raddoppia l'Iva per Sky', *L'Unità*, 29 November 2008.
53. One estimate suggests that *Lion of the Desert* was watched by 147,317 viewers, out of 7,663,100 spectators of the entire Sky platform that day. Although the figure is quite flattering in relation to Sky Movies Italian records (it was then the third highest result), it is insignificant when compared with the many millions of people who tuned in to RAI's recent historical fictions *Il Cuore nel Pozzo*, *Cefalonia* and *Il Sangue dei Vinti*. The figures are reported at http://www.digital-forum.it/showthread.php?t=67760&page=18.
54. Richard Bosworth, 'War, Totalitarianism and "Deep Belief" in Fascist Italy, 1935–43', *European History Quarterly*, 34:4 (2004) 475–505.

55. 'De Felice did not exaggerate when he wrote that, as the armies advanced on Addis Abeba, unimaginable exaltation was visited on the *Duce*.' Richard Bosworth, *Mussolini* (London: Arnold, 2002) 308.
56. Peter Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory* (London: Bloomsbury, 1999) 239–66.

Epilogue

1. Christopher Duggan, *The Force of Destiny. A History of Italy since 1796* (London: Penguin, 2007) 587.

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Amarcord (Federico Fellini, 1973)
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Anni Ruggenti (*Roaring Years*, Luigi Zampa, 1963)
Apa (*Father*, István Szabó, 1966)
Bengasi (Augusto Genina, 1942)
Bon Voyage (Jean-Paul Rappeneau, 2003)
Caccia Tragica (*Tragic Hunt*, Giuseppe De Santis, 1949)
Captain Corelli's Mandolin (John Madden, 2001)
Carica Eroica (*Heroic Charge*, Francesco De Robertis, 1952)
Cefalonia (Riccardo Milani, 2005)
Claretta (Pasquale Squitieri, 1984)
Concorrenza Sleale (*Unfair Competition*, Ettore Scola, 2001)
Cristo si è Fermato a Eboli (*Christ Stopped at Eboli*, Francesco Rosi, 1979)
Cronache di Poveri Amanti (*Chronicles of Poor Lovers*, Carlo Lizzani, 1952)
Die Blechtrommel (*The Tin Drum*, Volker Schlöndorff, 1979)
Die Ehe der Maria Braun (*The Marriage of Maria Braun*, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1978)
Divisione Folgore (*Folgore Division*, Duilio Coletti, 1955)
El Alamein: Deserto di Fuoco (*Tanks of El Alamein*, Guido Malatesta, 1958)
El Alamein: La Linea del Fuoco (*El Alamein, the Line of Fire*, Enzo Monteleone, 2002)
Elle s'Appellait Sarah (*Sarah's Key*, Gilles Pacquet-Brenner, 2010)
Era Notte a Roma (*It Was Night in Rome*, Roberto Rossellini, 1960)
Film d'Amore e d'Anarchia (*Love and Anarchy*, Lina Wertmüller, 1973)
Germania Anno Zero (*Germany Year Zero*, Roberto Rossellini, 1948)
Gli Indifferenti (*Time of Indifference*, Francesco Maselli, 1964)
Heimat – Eine deutsche Chronik (*Heimat: a German Chronicle*, Edgar Reitz, 1984)
I Due Colonnelli (*The Two Colonels*, Steno, 1962)
I Due Marescialli (*The Two Marshals*, Sergio Corbucci, 1961)
I Due Nemici (*The Best of Enemies*, Guy Hamilton, 1961)
I Piccoli Maestri (*Little Teachers*, Daniele Luchetti, 1998)
I Telefoni Bianchi (*The Career of a Chambermaid*, Dino Risi, 1976)
Idi i Smotri (*Come and See*, Elem Klimov, 1985)
Il Bandito (*The Bandit*, Alberto Lattuada, 1946)
Il Carro Armato dell'8 Settembre (*The 8 September Tank*, Gianni Puccini, 1960)
Il Conformista (*The Conformist*, Bernardo Bertolucci, 1970),
Il Cuore nel Pozzo (The Heart in the Well, Alberto Negrin, 2005)
Il Gattopardo (*The Leopard*, Luchino Visconti, 1963)
Il Generale della Rovere (Carlo Carlei, 2011)

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Il Giardino dei Finzi-Contini (*The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, Vittorio De Sica, 1970)
Il Gobbo (*The Hunchback*, Carlo Lizzani, 1960)
Il Partigiano Johnny (*Johnny the Partisan*, Guido Chiesa, 2000)
Il Processo di Verona (The Verona Trial, Carlo Lizzani, 1962)
Il Sangue dei Vinti (*The Blood of the Defeated*, Michele Soavi, 2008)
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La Marcia su Roma (*The March on Rome*, Dino Risi, 1962)
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Lo Scemo di Guerra (*Madman at War*, Dino Risi, 1985)
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Matrimonio all'Italiana (*Marriage Italian Style*, Vittorio De Sica, 1964)
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Non c'è Pace Tra gli Ulivi (*No Peace Under the Olive Tree*, Giuseppe De Santis, 1950)
Novecento (*1900*, Bernardo Bertolucci, 1976)
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Obchod na Korze (*The Shop on Main Street*, Ján Kadár and Elmar Klos, 1964)
Paisá (*Paisan*, Roberto Rossellini, 1946)

Pasqualino Settebellezze (*Seven Beauties*, Lina Wertmüller, 1975)
Pokolenie (*A Generation*, Andrzej Wajda, 1955)
Polvere di Stelle (*Stardust*, Alberto Sordi, 1973)
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Vaghe Stelle dell'Orsa (*Sandra*, Luchino Visconti, 1965)
Vincere (Marco Bellocchio, 2009)
Vivere in Pace (*To Live in Peace*, Luigi Zampa, 1947)

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