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## *Pina's Pregnancy, Traumatic Realism, and the After-Life of Open City*

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This study attempts to account for the haunting power and the enduring legacy of the most wrenching shot-sequence in Roberto Rossellini's *Rome, Open City*. I am speaking of the scene in which Pina is felled by Nazi gun fire as she chases after the truck carrying Francesco and his comrades seized during the raid on their tenement building in Rome's Prenestino neighborhood. This scene, whose power to shock and disrupt remains unabated over the years, even when audiences are amply forewarned of the serial deaths that will be visited upon *Open City's* resistance characters, has come to transcend its narrative context and to stand, by synecdoche, for the entire cinematic movement which Rossellini's film was credited with founding. The iconic power of the scene was in evidence at the 1995 Cinecittà exhibit marking the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Italian cinema, where a video loop was entirely dedicated to its continuous replay. In that same year, Carlo Lizzani devoted a feature film, entitled *Celluloide*, to recreating the production of *Open City* (a choice of subject matter that elevated the making of a film to the status of a primary historical event, on the order of a military battle, a legislative triumph, or a major political scandal), in which the shooting and editing of Pina's death scene was given pride of place.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the strongest argument for the iconic power of this scene is the commemorative stamp, issued by the Italian government to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the end of WWII, which featured the image of Pina's death as the defining emblem of war. To underline the synecdochal value of that image, a caption beneath it read "Il cinema neorealista" and below that label, "Italia." Several years later, Ettore Scola made a brilliant short film entitled '43-'97, featuring a young Jewish boy who escapes the Nazi round-up of the Roman ghetto by hiding in a movie-house, where he views a montage of films in which Pina's death scene stands as the first example of postwar Italian cinematic achievement.<sup>2</sup> Within the fiction of Scola's short film, of course, the young Jewish boy's escape from Nazi persecution sets up an ironic counterpoint to Pina's fate in the wake of the German assault on her tenement, but the message is nonetheless one of survival—it affirms the undying power of a single shot sequence to conjure up an entire era, both historical and cinematographic, and to inspire generations of filmmakers who will venerate and develop that legacy.

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Before making his own sequel to *Open City* in the narrative of *Mamma Roma* (to be analyzed farther on), Pasolini was to enshrine his account of Pina's death scene in verses rich with promise for our own study of film and collective memory. The poem in question, "Continuazione della serata a San Michele," recalls the second part of an odyssey that had begun in Trastevere and concludes in an outdoor cinema in the San Michele district near Testaccio.<sup>3</sup> "Subito entro: scosso da un interno clamore/deciso a tremare nel ricordo" Pasolini writes of the emotions generated by the worn-out poster that had enticed him into the arena. Before the film even begins, then, Pasolini is in a heightened state of psychic preparedness, primed for what Jameson calls the "nostalgia mode of reception"<sup>4</sup> by the poster's image of "il caldo viso ovale dell'eroina" that offers such a striking contrast to the "grige persone" gathered to watch the film in the "arena senza vita." "Subito," he repeats several lines later, "alle prime inquadrature/ mi travolge e rapisce . . . l'intermittence/du coeur." The sudden intrusion of this French phrase with its reference to the involuntary memory of Proust enacts grammatically the very experience it describes. The poet is indeed the passive object of a process of evocation that he cannot control: he is abducted by memory. "Mi trovo nelle scure vie della memoria e nelle stanze/ misteriose dove l'uomo fisicamente è altro." Kidnapped and led along streets and into rooms on the movie screen, the poet is simultaneously taken on a journey along memory traces embedded deep within his psyche. "Eppure dal lungo uso fatto esperto/non perdo i fili"—as the poet navigates the topography of the film, its familiarity ("ecco . . . la Casilina . . . ecco l'epico paesaggio neorealista") enables him to thread his way across the memory map of his own mind. But this leisurely, comforting, and deeply elegiac stroll past "i fili del telegrafo, i selciati, i pini, i muretti scrostati" cannot remain indefinitely in the corridors of nostalgia. As Pasolini's reminiscence moves along the list of picturesque antiquarian details of the "paesaggio neorealista" progressing to the abstract "forme della dominazione nazista" the verses undergo a radical shift. The poem has finally arrived at its destination: the point where a specific scene from *Open City* breaks into Pasolini's verses, where idyllic flânerie along the paths of fond recollection gives way to the sudden violence of the film's first catastrophic event.

Quasi emblema ormai, l'urlo della Magnani  
 sotto le ciocche disordinatamente assolute  
 risuona nelle disperate panoramiche  
 e nelle sue occhiate vive e mute  
 si addensa il senso della tragedia.  
 È lì che si dissolve e si mutila  
 il presente, e assorda il canto degli aedi.

With Pina's death scene, "l'epico paesaggio neorealista" becomes the stage for tragedy, the memory map is torn, and the poet is reduced to silence.

How can we explain the transcendent impact of this particular moment in *Open City*, when so many other episodes should qualify for an equivalent place in the pantheon of filmographic recall? If martyrdom alone were the explanation, then why is the fatal torture scene of Manfredi, or the execution of Don Pietro not equally seared into our collective consciousness? In attempting to address this question, let us follow Christopher Wagstaff's lead in analyzing the remarkable acting performance of Anna Magnani as she propels herself

through the passage leading to the street, and then at the departing truck, with a wild fury that is extraordinary in the literal sense. Normally, if you run and rerun a struggle or a fight in a film enough times, you begin to see how it was choreographed. No matter how many times you rerun this scene at whatever speed, Magnani seems out of control.<sup>5</sup>

In other words, the character's actions at this point seem to exceed the boundaries of the work—they push against and break out of the film's representational frame—just as Pina shoves away the Nazi guards and rushes out toward a death that is too swift and senseless to be contained within its narrative vehicle and its technological frame. Barthes' concept of the "punctum" (an "element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me . . . that accident which pricks me [but also bruises me, is poignant to me]" as he writes in *Camera Lucida*<sup>6</sup>) could not find a better example than this moment in *Open City*, which indeed pierces the spectator, producing shock waves that verge on the traumatic. And it is with the very notion of trauma, understood etymologically as a wound,<sup>7</sup> that I would like to open my own investigation into this scene's "excess" with respect to the rest of the film. For I believe that the traumatic nature of the representation explains the inordinate impact of Pina's death—a death which can be considered, in retrospect and with the appropriate irony, the *scena madre* of neorealism.

Defined as "the disruption or breakdown that occurs when the psychic apparatus is suddenly presented with stimuli, either from within or without, that are too powerful to be dealt with, or assimilated in the usual way,"<sup>8</sup> trauma offers multiple interpretive openings into the scene. As spectators, we come to this narrative development in a condition of absolute unpreparedness—we are entirely vulnerable and defenseless before the assault that is to take our heroine away. The shock, in mid-film, is dramaturgical in nature—we have been lulled into the rhythms of the conventional melodrama which seems to be unfolding as Pina prepares for her belated wedding with Francesco,

and tenement life percolates around her, with its quaint touches of local color, vaudeville gags, and populist bonhomie. Pina has "carried" the film from the moment she first appeared on screen, cursing lustily as she emerged from the crowd of neighborhood women storming a local bakery, and laying proud claim to the title "Sora," whose dialectal resonance locates her squarely within the "extended family" of Rome's activist proletariat. The character's charisma leads us to strongly identify with her modest list of personal wishes: to celebrate her wedding in Church (rather than in Fascist City Hall); to heal the rift with her alienated sister Lauretta; and to arrive at war's end with a newly intact family unit. So powerful is the momentum of this traditional dramaturgy—we are so "wired" to accede to its logic—that its rupture in mid-film is simply beyond our ability to assimilate. We remain traumatized by it, the "psychic apparatus" of our film-viewing selves breaks down and we experience the second part of *Open City* in a state of stunned disbelief.

I have borrowed the term "traumatic realism" from Michael Rothberg's fine book on Holocaust representation, which focuses on the literary genre of testimony, caught between the competing demands for documentary, referential truth on the one hand, and self-conscious, modernist (and even postmodernist) reflections on the impossibility of its task, on the other.<sup>9</sup> The "traumatic" focus of Rothberg's study is inherent in its very subject matter—a historical event so extreme as to defy containment by any normal representational means. What requires a "traumatic realist" approach, then is the very exceptionality of the object of representation—an exceptionality that will have strategic implications on the level of form. The "referent" of Rossellini's film, instead, is all too woefully familiar—military occupation, clandestine resistance, betrayal, torture, —have long been the stuff of historical narrative. In the case of *Open City*, then, it is the convention of cinematic realism itself that is traumatized, the vehicle of realistic representation that is brought to a screeching halt in the face of Pina's narratively unassimilable and technically uncontainable death.

Reverting to the etymology of trauma as wound, we may look to Cathy Caruth's reading of Freud to determine the nature of this "injury" within the context of cinematic realism. Caruth argues that the symptoms of trauma "reflect, in startling directness and simplicity, nothing but the unmediated occurrence of violent events."<sup>10</sup> Trauma, then, is the experience of the psyche, unshielded by previously acquired defense mechanisms, in the face of historical extremity, and as such, it reveals the raw power of history to impinge on the individual mind.<sup>11</sup> It could be argued, then, that the trauma-inducing scene of Pina's death, which ruptures conventional plot development and defies cinematic techniques of containment, enacts on the level of form,

the collective injury inflicted upon the Italian national self by the events of 1943–45. In other words, the scene itself becomes a “symptom” in the psychoanalytic sense—a memory or nightmare that erupts into consciousness but remains unintelligible, resisting the mind’s attempts to place it within a coherent and accessible cognitive context.

But I would argue that there is something more to the traumatic impact of Pina’s death than would be warranted by the simple disruption of the marriage plot, and the bravura of Magnani’s performance. Pina is not only a bride-to-be, cut down on the eve of her nuptials, but she is also a mother-to-be<sup>12</sup>—and so her death becomes a death *en abyme*, reverberating on levels for which biology is only the most literal beginning. In film historical terms, therefore, this scene presents a striking paradox. The slaying of the protagonist-with-child in the dramaturgical sense discussed above serves violently to disabuse us of any preconceptions with regard to *Open City*’s narrative and formal agenda, clearing the stage for something radically new to emerge.<sup>13</sup> It is in Pina’s death scene, I would contend, that we may discern the true birth pangs of neorealism, a cinematic development originating from the conditions of trauma and rupture wrought by the wartime ordeal. This is the scene in which the impulses behind Rossellini’s breakthrough project find their most acute and explicit expression, and we could go so far as to say that, indeed, *Open City*’s film historical daring begins here.

To take the measure of Rossellini’s achievement, we must recall the “industrial” state of Italian cinema in 1945, when entrepreneurship was reduced to a minimum, and producers were willing to back only the safest commercial bets. A film documenting the country’s most excruciating recent experiences of occupation and Resistance would not be high on the list of bankable proposals in an Italy eager to leave its immediate past behind. Rossellini’s courage in *Open City* inhered in his determination to memorialize that immediate past—his film had a radically referential mission, despite the industry’s commitment to escapism and fluff. As is well known, the original intent of Rossellini and co-screenwriter Sergio Amidei was to make an episode film, entitled *Storie di ieri*, based on an array of true-life experiences under the Nazi occupation of Rome. As the script evolved, these short stories were amalgamated into a feature-length narrative, with a fictional superstructure uniting the interwoven tales of Resistance activism among leaders of the CLN, the clergy, and even the children of Rome. All of the major characters in the film have their basis in historical portraiture: Manfredi is a composite of partisan leaders Celeste Negarville and Giovanni Amendola, Bergmann combines attributes of SS commander Kappler and military chief Dolemann, and Don Pietro is modeled on Resistance priests Don Papagallo and Don Morosini.<sup>14</sup> But the point in the film where representation and documentation most closely



converge is the scene of Pina's death, based on the shooting down of Teresa Gullace, a pregnant woman who was protesting the detention of her husband along with a group of other men rounded-up to work for the Nazi war effort. This atrocity was staged as a public spectacle by a German soldier, eager to make of Gullace an object lesson for anyone who would dare issue a challenge to Nazi rule.<sup>15</sup> With this scene, Rossellini's aim is to un-do that Nazi object lesson, or rather, to re-stage it and re-signify it as a show of heroic memorialization, rather than as one of intimidation and deterrence.

Late in the film's production, this scene underwent a change that reflected another real-life incident, this time of far less dire consequence. Rather than positioning Pina on a sidewalk outside the barracks where Francesco and his comrades were detained, Rossellini has her running behind the truck carrying him away in a gesture of far greater emotional impact and cinematic effectiveness. It was Anna Magnani's desperate chase after the van in which her lover was leaving the movie set in a huff which inspired Amidei to reposition Pina as the moving, rather than the static target of Nazi gunfire. The change in the setting and blocking of the scene opened up possibilities for multiple camera perspectives (five of them!)<sup>16</sup> and cross-cutting with a machine-gun fire rapidity that builds tension to the absolute breaking point.

Like many of the other historical elements on which *Open City* was based, the death of Pina/Teresa Gullace already "existed" in the collective consciousness of local audiences, so that the film sequence would have activated a spark of immediate recognition, a moment of déjà vu that would have underwritten, even at some very inchoate psychological level, the truth claims of the film. Adding to the film's testimonial force is the contribution of actor Aldo Fabrizi who, in playing Don Pietro in this scene, was reenacting his own real-life experience as witness to the shooting of Gullace.<sup>17</sup> But, as Forgacs has astutely pointed out, the belief in *Open City's* referentiality must be tempered by the knowledge that its "historical memory" was thoroughly mediated by the popular narratives and iconographies that spontaneously sprung up around this highly fraught past. Of special relevance to our study is the visual memorialization of Gullace in a sculpture by Leoncillo Leonardi, entitled "Italian mother killed by the Germans."<sup>18</sup> *Open City* may thus be seen as the venue for crystallizing the various accounts circulating at the time, and consolidating them into the definitive, and highly transmittable form of Rossellini's film.

Our analysis of this shot-sequence, however, cannot be limited to the dynamism and horror of Pina's frantic rush toward the Nazi vehicle. The final frames of the sequence are necessarily more static, and they are filled with iconographic weight. Holding the woman's body in his lap, Don Pietro assumes the pietà pose, with a gender-role reversal of considerable irony.<sup>19</sup> It reminds us that in life, Pina's own

iconography was more akin to that of the Virgin Mary, recalling specifically the “Madonna del parto” when she announces her pregnancy to Manfredi “un matrimonio un po’ in ritardo, capirete, in queste condizioni” patting her abdomen with a knowing look and a sigh. And in a scene after her death, during Mass in the local parish church, the worshipper’s recitation of the “Ave Maria” strongly confirms Pina’s identification with the Madonna, despite her status as a “fallen woman.”

The symbolic importance of children to the Utopian message of *Open City* is well known. Romoletto the leader of the child warriors, recalls the mythic founder of the city, and together with Marcello, himself heir to the combined models of Francesco’s secular militancy and Don Pietro’s religiously inspired activist stance, the boys herald Italy’s postwar rebirth. But the thought of Pina’s unborn child remains at the edges of our consciousness even as we witness the procession of the young boys at the end of the film who march back into Rome to “reclaim” their city for a future of social justice and religious faith. The much touted symbolism of the children as bearers of this Utopian banner must be tempered by our traumatic awareness of the baby that does not get born.<sup>20</sup>

This historically-induced “miscarriage” joins forces with a closely related rhetorical tradition to reinforce our reading of *Open City* as a harbinger of the postwar Italian national self. The topos of the feminized body politic, which makes of female characters personification allegories for the course of the nation, goes at least as far back as Dante’s anguished lament in Purgatory 6: Ahi serva Italia, di dolor ostello/nave senza nocchier in gran tempesta/non donna di provincia, ma bordello,” where the sexually fallen woman has come to signify Italy’s loss of political innocence and moral integrity.<sup>21</sup> In *Open City* Pina shares this allegorizing function with another character, Marina, who has been corrupted by the Nazis’ lure of drugs, caresses, and fur coats, to betray the partisan cause and to bring about the arrest of her former lover Manfredi. Both of these fallen women personify the damaged Italian condition at this historical juncture, but it is Pina, the Resistance activist, who allegorically redeems the Italian collective self, and in her capacity as mother and bride-to-be, it is she who promises to heal the broken family of Italy in the aftermath of war.

But the traumatic and iconic scene of her slaying has precluded such consolations, providing a set of images so deeply engraved into the Italian popular mind as to constitute the “emblema” of Pasolini’s tribute to *Open City* in the poem previously discussed. If the psyche of creative artists is in close communion with both the personal and the collective unconscious (as I believe it is), then we could expect postwar Italian filmmakers to be alive to the evocative power of this traumatic cinematic memory. And it should come as no surprise that such au-



teurs as Visconti and Pasolini would tap into that memory to reactivate it in the service of updating and judging the progress of the postwar Italian self. The most obvious clue to such a continuity of purpose in their filmographies is the casting of "la Magnani" as the mother of a son or daughter who would have reached the age of Pina's child had the narrative of *Open City* allowed her to survive the war. I am speaking of Visconti's *Bellissima* (1951) and Pasolini's *Mamma Roma* (1962), which, together with *Open City*, form an on-going allegory of the Italian national self from the Liberation through the reconstruction period to the threshold of "Il miracolo economico" of the 1960's.

Like Pina, the protagonist of Visconti's film, Maddalena Cecconi, is a *popolana*, hailing from the Prenestino neighborhood, and like her *Open City* predecessor, she is courageous, impetuous, and a dreamer. But this is where the similarity ends, for the protagonist of *Bellissima* puts her considerable energy and resourcefulness to the service of the most vapid petit bourgeois ideals, as if the experience of the Occupation and Liberation had passed over her without leaving a trace, making her a literal embodiment of the Restoration—the impulse to reinstate the old order of pre-war establishment values. Maddalena's relentless drive in *Bellissima* is to land her 5-year-old daughter Maria the starring role in a film, and to that end she is willing to push her little girl to the limits of the child's physical and psychological endurance, while herself stooping to behaviors of an unseemly, when not self-degrading, sort. In her single-minded pursuit of social advancement at the expense of her child, Maddalena has jeopardized the little girl's health, placed the mother-daughter bond under inordinate pressure, threatened the stability of her marriage to the much more clear-headed and nurturing Spartaco, and brought the family to the verge of financial ruin. But in a flash of insight at the end of the film, Maddalena comes to understand the bankruptcy of her values and the damage that she has caused her daughter by objectifying the child and exploiting her for material gain. At this point, Maddalena renounces her ambitions, refuses to sign the longed-for contract offered by Cinecittà, and at last achieves the moral stature of Pina.

*Bellissima* could be seen as the story of a belated, secular conversion, a *presa di coscienza* which brings Maddalena by the conclusion of the film to the level of consciousness that had characterized Pina from the very start of *Open City*. Products of a postwar culture intent upon the soulless pursuit of material well-being, Maddalena and her peers suffer from an addiction—they are prey to the escapist pastimes offered by the society of spectacle: cinema and soccer are what seem uppermost in their minds as they emerge from the nightmare of war. In Maddalena's determination to land Maria a part in the film-within-the-film, a melodrama directed by Alessandro Blasetti, postwar Italian cinema as a whole comes under indictment by Visconti for its failure to

embrace the consciousness-raising mission of neorealism, for the industry's "Restoration" of the pre-war cinematic status quo. But by the end of *Bellissima*, Visconti turns that indictment back on itself by using the cinema's own medium-specific properties to reveal the dangers of filmic fascination. It is in the projection booth of Cinecittà, as Maddalena watches the screen test of her daughter, who had been reduced to tears before Blasetti's camera, and who had provoked a cruel chorus of laughter among the director's flunkies, that the protagonist comes to understand the folly of her ambitions and the damage that she has wrought. The mechanisms of cinematic projection reveal to Maddalena the cruel workings of her own psychic projection onto a daughter whom she had turned into a mere image, to be objectified, exploited, and ridiculed by the denizens of Cinecittà. Acting on this new self-understanding, Maddalena storms into the screening room and using gestures strongly reminiscent of Pina's as she broke away from the Nazi guards to follow Francesco's truck, the protagonist fights her way to Blasetti and confronts him with his callousness. But Maddalena's recall of Pina's action in this scene has the paradoxical effect of both appropriating the earlier character's dignity, while reminding us of the historical/cultural distance between their respective films. In allegorical terms the Italy personified by Pina was one that gave rise to heroic acts of self-sacrifice in the cause of national popular rebirth. By 1951, the child born of that promise has become a mere screen onto which a Restoration Italy can project its own narcissistic image of hoped-for glamour and financial gain. And the best that the cinema can do is to expose the vacuity of those values, and unmask the film industry's complicity in their propagation.<sup>22</sup>

Ten years later, Magnani will again appear in a film where her motherhood becomes a powerful signifier of the Italian national condition since the end of WWII. Pasolini's *Mamma Roma* becomes the third installment in this cinematic running commentary, which invokes the memory of Pina as a measure of the extent to which postwar Italy has failed to fulfill the Resistance promise of collective rebirth. In the character of Mamma Roma, a prostitute determined to buy her way out of the "oldest profession" and into the lower middle-class, Pasolini revisits the allegory of Italy in the persona of the sexually fallen, but redeemable woman that Magnani had portrayed in *Open City*. But the Mamma Roma character has far more in common with Maddalena Ceconi of *Bellissima* than with Pina, convinced as the former prostitute is that redemption lies in success of a strictly monetary and social sort. By relocating to a better neighborhood, and moving up the economic food chain as a marketer of vegetables, rather than of her own flesh, Mamma Roma claims her part in the "Miracolo economico" of the 1960's.

But it is in her mothering capacity that Pasolini invites us to compare Magnani's character in his film (she is, after all, the "mamma" of

Roma) to that of Pina, and to draw the necessary conclusions about Italy's postwar fall from grace. Ettore, Mamma Roma's 16 year old son, would have been born just after the Liberation, making his chronic delinquency, and his mother's misguided efforts to "improve" him, an allegorical comment on the failure of Italy's much touted hopes for collective renewal in the wake of Fascism and war. When Ettore dies at the conclusion of *Mamma Roma*, we realize that the longed-for rebirth is a still birth, and that Ettore was, in a way, dead on arrival.

Unable to raise him from infancy, Mamma Roma had literally "farmed" Ettore out to relatives in the countryside of Guidonia, where he had grown up without access to any form of education that could have prepared him for life *in città*. It is with some difficulty that Mamma Roma convinces Ettore to leave the farm, and in the process of literally uprooting him, she reveals her sociological agenda. "Vuoi passa' la vita qua? Te piace proprio la zappa?" she asks Ettore. And later she'll tell her parish priest, "Allora, avrei messo al mondo un figlio a mandarlo a fare il manovale," expressing her absolute contempt for a life of menial labor. Mamma Roma equates horizontal movement across the city-country border with vertical movement across class lines, little realizing that in removing Ettore from the land as a fully formed young adult, devoid of the necessary skills to survive in the urban environment, she is condemning him to a social limbo that will eventually spell his doom. Because she will not accept a proletarian condition for her son, Mamma Roma blocks the one occupational path that would lead Ettore to ideological redemption within the allegory of the film. It is the parish priest who offers Mamma Roma the vocational advice that would save her son from ruin: Ettore should work in construction. The new Italy of the postwar years must be built from scratch ("cominciare con umiltà, da dove dovete cominciare, da zero" the priest advises Mamma Roma) by its youth, schooled in the values of a parental generation itself transformed by the partisan struggle. But like Magnani's former incarnation in *Bellissima*, Mamma Roma seems untouched by the historical experience of war—her petit bourgeois values survive intact, and her dreams of success remain bound to surface measures of status and wealth.

Upon learning that Ettore is unskilled and without the maternal motivation to enter the work force, the priest remarks "su niente non si costruisce niente—voi volete costruire il futuro di vostro figlio su niente" comparing the physical construction of an edifice or a city with the solid and value-laden formation of the self. In retrospect, we can see that Pasolini has been setting up such an analogy all along, filming Ettore against a series of backdrops rich with significance for the course of the young man's inner life. In a stunning shot sequence, Pasolini's camera follows Ettore through the landscape surrounding the apartment buildings of Cecafumo, built in the immediate postwar

period on the outskirts of Rome. Ettore's usual lethargy gives way in this scene to whimsical movements among the ruins of an ancient aqueduct, set in striking contrast to the sterile, De Chirico-like buildings of the housing projects. We soon come to realize that this "new city" growing on the periphery of Rome is a pseudo-city, a mere simulacrum of the historically rooted polis it seeks to replace, a foundation-less construction built on the empty postwar premise of material prosperity and ersatz prestige—in other words, an instant ruin, like Ettore himself. No image is more revealing of Pasolini's indictment than the recurring one of the Ceccafumo skyline, crowned by the architecture of a dome, gleaming in the artificial splendor of what appears to be a coating of aluminum foil.<sup>23</sup> Appearing eight times in the film through the focalization of Mamma Roma herself, the skyline achieves powerful symbolic force as the projection of the character's petty hopes which modulate into defeat. Viewed at first as the sign of secular redemption—Mamma Roma becomes an assiduous church-goer in pursuit of respectability and social contacts—the dome becomes the object of Mamma Roma's tragic gaze at the end of the film after she learns of Ettore's death. The new city is really a necropolis, "una città di catafalchi" as Mamma Roma had bitterly joked in one of the two famous monologues signaling her return to the streets. With the final image of the tin-foil dome presiding over the skyline of the "New Rome," Pasolini ironically recalls the concluding frames of *Open City*, whose child warriors march back into town with the cupola of San Pietro hovering on the horizon.<sup>24</sup> In so doing, Pasolini sets the dome of Ceccafumo in parodic relationship to its Vatican model, suggesting the counterfeit nature of the redemption offered by a "miracolo" which is strictly "economico" in nature.

If the death of Pina and the non-birth of her child in *Open City* left a traumatic memory deeply embedded in Italian collective consciousness, postwar Italian filmmakers have been able to draw on that imagery to conjure up the era of Resistance ideals for which she died, and to measure the distance traversed since the foundational moment of 1945. Though Magnani reinvents the persona that made her the icon of neorealism in subsequent films, and though the unborn child of *Open City* does indeed come to life in Maria of *Bellissima* and Ettore of *Mamma Roma*, the maternal character never achieves the level of revolutionary political consciousness nor personal selflessness that made Pina the mythic mother of the re-founded city. From the perspective of Visconti's and Pasolini's "sequels" to *Open City*, the "historic miscarriage" within the narrative of Rossellini's film served as a harbinger of the postwar rebirth that was never to be.

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NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed analysis of *Celluloide*, see my essay, "Celluloide and the Palimpsest of Cinematic Memory: Carlo Lizzani's Film of the Story Behind *Open City*," in Roberto Rossellini's 'Open City,' ed. Sidney Gottlieb (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 67–84.

<sup>2</sup> I have included a DVD of Scola's short film, along with a close reading of it, in *Italian Film in the Shadow of Auschwitz* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), pp. 161–167.

<sup>3</sup> Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Poesie* (Milan: Garzanti, 1970), pp. 70–73. All quotes from Pasolini's verses come from p. 73 of this edition. For calling my attention to this poem, I am indebted to David Forgacs, whose *Rome Open City* (London: BFI Publishing, 2000), p. 51. made a strategic reference to it.

<sup>4</sup> Though Jameson coined the phrase to describe one of the rhetorical effects of postmodern cinema in *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke UP, 1991), p. 20, it can be attributed to any film experience that promises to conjure up an earlier time, either in terms of its object of representation, or of its formal values.

<sup>5</sup> Christopher Wagstaff *Italian Neorealist Cinema: An Aesthetic Approach* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), p. 126.

<sup>6</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), p. 26–27.

<sup>7</sup> For this definition see Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1996), p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> *Psychoanalytic Terms & Concepts*, ed. Burness E. Moore and Bernard D. Fine (New Haven: The American Psychoanalytic Association, 1990), p. 197.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

<sup>10</sup> Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 59.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>12</sup> On the significance of Pina's motherhood for a feminist reading of *Open City*, see JoAnn Cannon's original and thought-provoking essay "Resistance heroes and resisting spectators: Reflections on Rossellini's *Roma, città aperta*," *The Italianist* 17 (1997), pp. 145–157.

<sup>13</sup> On the destabilizing effect of Pina's death scene on an audience primed for conventional cinematic plot developments, see Marcia Landy, "Diverting Clichés: Femininity, Masculinity, Melodrama and Neorealism in *Open City*," in *Rossellini's 'Rome Open City'*, ed. Sidney Gottlieb (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 89–91.

<sup>14</sup> For detailed accounts of the film's conception and the evolution of the screenplay, see Wagstaff, *Italian Neorealist Cinema*, pp. 138 ff, and Forgacs, *Rome Open City*, pp. 13–22.

<sup>15</sup> Forgacs, *Rome Open City*, p. 16.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>17</sup> Wagstaff, *Italian Neorealist Cinema*, p. 139.

<sup>18</sup> Forgacs, *Rome Open City*, p. 18.

<sup>19</sup> I am grateful to Alan R. Perry for having called my attention to the relevance of this iconography, despite the inversion of the male-female identities in Rossellini's *mise-en-scène*. For a thorough reading of the Christological allusions in *Open City*, see *Il santo partigiano martire: La retorica del sacrificio nelle biografie commemorative* (Ravenna: Longo, 2001), pp. 43–47.

<sup>20</sup> In JoAnn Cannon's reading of *Open City*, Pina's pregnancy becomes fraught with symbolic importance. "Not only is she the mother of Marcello, one of the leaders of the youth Resistance movement, but she is also the mother of the unborn offspring of the partisan hero and one of the potential heirs of the new and better Italy which Francesco envisions on the eve of their wedding." See "Resistance heroes and resisting spectators," p. 147.

<sup>21</sup> Marcia Landy cites this topos, and comments on Rossellini's unconventional use of it, in her analysis of the film's multifaceted iconoclasm ("Diverting Clichés," p. 94). For a detailed study of the history of this topos in literature and the visual arts, see my essay, "The Italian Body Politic is a Woman: Feminized National Identity in Postwar Italian Film," in *Sparks and Seeds: Medieval Literature and Its Afterlife: Essays in Honor of John Freccero*, ed. Dana E. Stewart and Alison Cornish (Turnout: Brepols, 2000), pp. 329–347.

<sup>22</sup> For a more detailed analysis of *Bellissima* in this regard, see my chapter "Luchino Visconti's *Bellissima*: The Diva, the Mirror and the Screen" in *After Fellini: National Cinema in the Postmodern Age* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2002), pp. 39–58.

<sup>23</sup> In *A Certain Realism: Making Use of Pasolini's Film Theory and Practice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 90–93, Maurizio Viano offers an acute analysis of this recurrent image, and Pasolini's strategic optical choices in filming it.

<sup>24</sup> For the connection between Pasolini's skyline and Rossellini's at the end of *Open City*, see Viano, *Ibid.*