



COMEDY AND WOMEN IN NEOREALIST CINEMA

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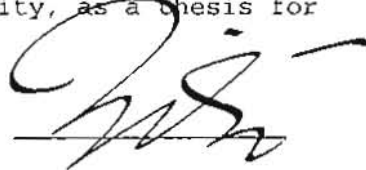
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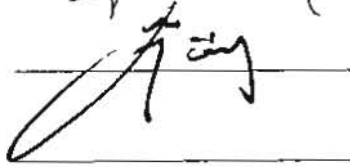
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## ABSTRACT

### COMEDY AND WOMEN IN NEOREALIST CINEMA

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The main purpose of this thesis is to provide a theoretical investigation into how comedy films in post- World War II Italian cinema handled neorealism's social content, historical actuality, and political commitment. Are comedy films serious enough to depict the pressing problems of the time or do they simply ignore the socialist political agenda? When discussing the characteristics of comedy films, I draw specifically on female representations' role in the constructions of narration. Through detailed film analyses, the project highlights three films made between 1946 and 1952: Renato Castellani's *Due soldi di speranza* (1952), Luigi Zampa's *Vivere in pace* (1946), and Luciano Emmer's *Una domenica d'agosto* (1950). This study aims to illustrate how the comic mode is created, by which signs we recognize that we are in the presence of a comic work. For the representation of female characters, feminist film theory serves as the basis of the chosen theorization and the method of text interpretation.

Keywords: comedy, neorealism, feminist film theory, genre

## ÖZET

### YENİ GERÇEKÇİ SİNEMA'DA KOMEDİ VE KADIN

Balaban, Betül

Medya ve İletişim Çalışmaları Yüksek Lisans Programı

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Bu çalışmanın ana amacı, İkinci Dünya Savaşı sonrası İtalyan sinemasında komedi filmlerinin, Yeni Gerçekçiliğin sosyal içerik, tarihsel aktüelite ve politik sorumluluk amaçlarını nasıl ele aldığına dair kuramsal bir inceleme yapmaktır. Komedi filmleri dönemin sorunlarını anlatabilecek ciddiyet midir yoksa sosyal politik gündemi yok mu saymıştır? Komedi filmlerinin özelliklerini incelerken, kadın temsillerinin anlatımı oluşturmadaki rolüne ayrıca yer verilmiştir. Bu çalışma detaylı film analizleri ile 1946- 1952 yılları arasında yapılmış üç filme dikkat çekmektedir. Bunlar; Renato Castellani'nin *Due soldi di speranza* (1952), Luigi Zampa'nın *Vivere in pace* (1946), ve Luciano Emmer'in *Una domenica d'agosto* (1950) isimli filmleridir. Bu filmlerde komik durumların nasıl oluşturulduğu, hangi işaretlerin bize komedinin varlığını farketmemizi sağladığı sorularına cevap bulunmaya çalışılmıştır. Kadın temsilleri incelemesinde, inceleme ve yorumlama metodu olarak Feminist Film Teorisi kullanılmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: komedi, yeni gerçekçilik, feminist film teori, janr

To My Parents

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my gratitude to several people whose invaluable contributions have helped me complete this thesis. First, I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Nezh Erdođan, for his constant encouragement and guidance throughout all stages of this project. His willingness to give his time so generously has been very much appreciated. An acknowledgement is also expressed to the faculty members of Media and Communication Studies, who have been a constant source of inspiration and influence. I am further indebted to my Committee Members, Dr. Zafer Yörük and Dr. Aysun Akan, whose insightful comments were greatly appreciated. I would also like to extend my thanks to Gary Darnells, whose proof-reading and comments were very valuable.

A note of thanks must also go to Professor Robert Cardullo, who introduced me to Italian Cinema, and whose enthusiasm for *Neorealismo* had lasting effect.

The friendship of Cemre Güneş Şengül, Evren Onur Kök, and Erman Dođan will never be forgotten. Finally, I wish to thank my family for their endless support and encouragement throughout my study.



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## INTRODUCTION

*We want a hut to live in where we can lay our head,  
A plot of earth to toil in where we can live and die,  
A loaf of bread, a pair of shoes, some stockings and some socks,  
So we and our children can believe in a tomorrow!*<sup>1</sup>

An interest in the history of Italian cinema has been reawakened, reshaped by a wider perspective in the last few decades. Thanks to field developments in cinema studies: accessibility to the older films, some of which have been found and restored, otherwise would be lost, and also growing interest in university film departments make it possible for insightful views on the film history to flourish. It is thus convenient to conduct a study about neorealist directors and their attempts in comedy genre. Italian Neorealism guided and influenced international cinema since World War II. “During the postwar era, there was practically no country that was not influenced to some degree by Rossellini’s and De Sica’s masterpieces.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The song which the homeless people sing in Vittoria De Sica’s *Miracle in Milan*.

<sup>2</sup>Gian Piero Brunetta, *The history of Italian cinema : a guide to Italian film from its origins to the twenty-first century* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 2009) 115

“That certain films produced in the 1940s and the early 1950s are identified with neorealism and its impact on Italian cinema, and then more broadly with international filmmaking, is indisputable.”<sup>3</sup> In fact, its echo can still be seen in several examples of contemporary cinema, in as opposed to dominant commercial cinema.

Most recently, the Iranian cinema has confirmed the neorealist legacy in such pictures (some of them also concerned with the lives of children) as Kianoush Ayari’s *The Abadanis* (1993), a virtual reworking of *Bicycle Thieves* in contemporary Tehran; Abbas Kiarostami’s Koker trilogy (1987- 1994),... Jafar Panahi’s *The White Balloon* (1995); Majid Majidi’s *The Children of Heaven* (1997); and Samira Makhmalbaf’s *The Apple* (1998).<sup>4</sup>

Cinema, as an art form, has never been examined exclusively. Its interweaving of social, political and economic factors is considered essential to understanding the film aesthetics, theory and spirit. From this perspective, to comprehend Italian cinematic neorealism, I find it helpful to start from the cinema of the Fascist period. Regarding the interrelation of society and cinema, I will try to understand the changing juncture of the era, and its effects on film production. The Italian Fascists were aware of the power of cinema as a propaganda tool and tried to use this power to shape a national culture, which could serve the desires of the Fascist ideologies. “The fascist regime took total control of cinematic information

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<sup>3</sup>Marcia Landy, *Italian film* (Cambridge ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2000) 14

<sup>4</sup>Bert Cardullo, *André Bazin and Italian neorealism* (New York : Continuum, 2011) 27

and Mussolini proclaimed himself the father of the enterprise.”<sup>5</sup> “Committed to the notion of cinema as a weapon in the service of Fascism, *L’Unione Cinematografica Educativa* (LUCE) was formed in 1923 as a cooperative venture for the production of documentaries and newsreels that were to be shown in commercial film theaters along with the commercial films.”<sup>6</sup> Like German Nazis and Russian Communists, their main purpose was using cinema as a way of propaganda and educating the nation with fascist ideology. “To achieve these goals, Fascism publicly promoted the impression of an autochthonous cinema while privately acknowledging the industry’s assimilation of successful non-national models. As Mussolini’s admiration for the USSR’s film industry made clear, Russia’s model was the one to emulate”.<sup>7</sup> One of the most important schools for training in film, *Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia* was founded in 1935, by Mussolini himself, which still preserve its fame today. As Mary P. Wood remarks, Mussolini’s aim was to modernize Italy, on the model of a large corporation with a strong director at its head. The expansion of film production, and especially the growth of cinema audiences, formed part of this modernization of Italy in that, although the fascist State never fully controlled

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<sup>5</sup>Gian Piero Brunetta, *The history of Italian cinema : a guide to Italian film from its origins to the twenty-first century* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 2009) 61

<sup>6</sup>Marcia Landy, *Italian film* (Cambridge ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2000) 49

<sup>7</sup> Piero Garofalo, “Seeing Red: The Soviet Influence on Italian Cinema in the Thirties” in *Re-viewing Fascism: Italian Cinema, 1922-1943* edited by Jacqueline Reich and Piero Garofalo (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002) 223

commercial film production, it did put in place powerful institutions.<sup>8</sup> The Italian popular cinema in the 1930s and 1940s were mostly influenced by the theatricality and “their emphasis on fictional narratives is drawn from theater, opera, literature, and folklore”.<sup>9</sup> The reason that these films were identified as escapist is that their overemphasis upon wealth, urbanization, and modernity, rather than depicting the harsh realities of the society.

The transition in Italian cinema from the Fascist period to neorealism is more about social concerns rather than aesthetics. The collective aim of the neorealist directors is mostly associated with cultural projects against the ‘escapist’ films of the Fascist period. However, “in the immediate post-war period, the freedom of expression and the inquiry that neorealist cinema exploited was seen as embodying the spirit required for the rejection and burial of the Fascist mentality, and as the prerequisite for the construction of a truly anti-fascist and democratic nation”.<sup>10</sup> The periodization of the neorealist movement is conventionally held to be 1945, which is the year of definitive fall of fascism and the end of the Second World War. The years from 1945 to 1948 is defined as the period of ‘high neorealism’, and cultural considerations played large part in the making of a number of films, partly as a result

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<sup>8</sup>Mary P. Wood, *Italian Cinema* (Oxford ; N.Y. : Berg, 2005) 7

In her book *Italian Cinema*, Wood writes that this institutional infrastructure laid the foundations both for post-1945 neorealist cinema, and the expansion of popular cinema.

<sup>9</sup> Marcia, Landy, “Theatricality and Impersonation: The Politics of Style in the Cinema of the Italian Fascist Era” in *Re-viewing Fascism: Italian Cinema, 1922-1943* edited by Jacqueline Reich and Piero Garofalo (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002) 250

<sup>10</sup> Christopher, Wagstaff, *Italian Neorealist Cinema: An Aesthetic Approach* (Toronto; University of Toronto Press, 2008) 26

of the ‘hiatus’ in producers’ hegemony (artists themselves often arranged the financing of their films).<sup>11</sup>

I intend to investigate three films from neorealist period, which are *Vivere in Pace* (*To Live in Peace*, Luigi Zampa, 1947), *Domenica D’agosto* (*Sunday in August*, Luciano Emmer, 1950), *Due Soldi di Speranza* (*Two Cents Worth of Hope*, Renato Castellani, 1952). My concern, in returning to the characters of the comedy films in neorealism, is to what extent these selected films, through comic mode, are able to focus on the socially significant themes of the period that the neorealist directors aim to touch. If social problems are serious matters and humour is a funny one, how do these directors blur the boundaries between the two? Comedy can have serious intent, whereas social problems or political subjects can be represented in a comical manner. Therefore, particular attention will be given to identifying the construction of the comic climate and how it is used as a way of voicing criticism in a society undergoing rapid change. In addition to exploring comedy versus seriousness, I will try to elaborate female characters’ roles in the narrative structure of these comedy films. As in all three films, the female protagonists are depicted distinctively more active and insubordinate compared with the “Woman-as-Mother” image of the Fascist period.

Before examining the films individually, I intend to devote a chapter to the methodologies of film comedy, which is pioneered by Anglo-American scholars. This section will focus on comic structures, categories and definitions by Gerald

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<sup>11</sup>Christopher, Wagstaff, *Italian Neorealist Cinema: An Aesthetic Approach* (Toronto; University of Toronto Press, 2008) 20



Mast, and Geoff King's comedy, narrative, and representation. While these works largely deal with Hollywood comedy films, I will try to address the similarities and exceptions in Zampa, Emmer and Castellani's selected films, as being representative examples of neorealist comedy genre. In addition to that, these films have garnered some success abroad as well – *Due Soldi di Speranza* won Grand Prix du Festival International du Film in Cannes Film Festival in 1952, *Domenica D'agosto* was nominated to British Academy Film Awards in 1952 and *Vivere in Pace* won the New York Film Critics Circle Award for Best Foreign Film in 1947.

Comedy films are traditionally neglected by scholars as being trivial and predictable. The amount of critical work about comedy genre is considerably smaller, as being “less serious” than other genres. The philosophical reason for that may be seen in Bergson's words: “Our excuse for attacking the problem in our turn must lie in the fact that we shall not aim at imprisoning the comic spirit within a definition.”<sup>12</sup> However, recently there is a growing interest in the area, especially for film comedy. Humor research is an interdisciplinary study; philosophers, linguists, psychologist and film scholars have contributed to the field. As cited in King's *Film Comedy*, Murray Davis suggests of humor more generally:

It is fruitful to apply Hobbes' superiority theory to aggressive jokes, Bergson's mechanization theory to farce, Freud's sexual theory to dirty jokes, and Northrop Frye's anthropological theory to Aristophanic Old Comedy... But humor is too complicated to be comprehended by such single-factor theories, no matter how well they explain one of its aspects.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Henri Bergson, “Laughter” [1900], Fred Rothwell, tr., in *Comedy*, Wylie Syper, ed. (Doubleday & Company, 1956)

<sup>13</sup>Geoff King, *Film Comedy* (London ; New York : Wallflower Press, 2002) 5

Comic film is inherently interdisciplinary as well, often including verbal or linguistic humor, and mostly has a comedic narrative structure. Undoubtedly, it is a visual medium that has the most highly-developed forms of visual comedy. As stated above, it is hard to analyze comedy films with particular discipline. Andrew Horton underlines in his book *Comedy/cinema/theory* that “No totalizing theory of comedy has proved successfully.”<sup>14</sup> However, a few universal theories of humor are accepted, which are focused not only on film comedy, but also on literature, drama and other forms. In the film analysis, the most applied universal humor theories *superiority theory*, *incongruity theory*, and *relief theory*, will be used in order to understand why the viewer find these films comical. Before looking at the comic mode in films, we should keep in mind that “the comic film ‘says’ something about the relation of man to the society”<sup>15</sup>. In this context, comedy films of neorealist directors have something to “say” about the Italian society; constructions of the nation after war, gender representations and the working-class problems in particular. “As a social product, comedy is often involved – implicitly or explicitly– in the politics of representation: the way one group or another is identified, distinguished or portrayed.”<sup>16</sup> Therefore, in contrast to the general view of “trivialness” of comedy films, I argue that

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<sup>14</sup>Andrew Horton, *Comedy/cinema/theory* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1991) 2

<sup>15</sup>Gerald Mast, *The comic mind; comedy and the movies* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill , 1973) 20

<sup>16</sup>Geoff King, *Film Comedy* (London ; New York : Wallflower Press, 2002) 129

Castellani, Zampa, and Emmer have criticism against the current social and political status quo.

“Although critics generally snubbed Italian comedies because of their facile jokes and unoriginal situations, these films –with their double entendres and parodies of everyday life and situations –touched upon important aspects of Italian life.”<sup>17</sup> Poverty-stricken family of Antonio in *Two Cents Worth of Hope* and his attempts to find a job; ordinary people in a small village during the last days of World War II in *To Live in Peace* or a casual Sunday at the seaside in *Sunday in August* try to give a glimpse of Italian life through a comic mode. “We are not encouraged to take comedy very seriously.”<sup>18</sup> However, in all these films, the comic climate that the directors create is a way in different senses to express a social attention.

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<sup>17</sup>Gian Piero Brunetta, *The history of Italian cinema : a guide to Italian film from its origins to the twenty-first century* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 2009) 115

<sup>18</sup>Geoff King, *Film Comedy* (London ; New York : Wallflower Press, 2002) 4

## CHAPTER I

### 1.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

Many scholars have proposed to explain cinematic neorealism, its techniques and subjects, in the last few decades. The diverse scholarship surrounding neorealism seems limitless, incorporating cinema studies with historical and cultural studies. Although the filmic literature covers a wide variety of works related to the techniques of neorealism, this review will mainly focus on defining the aim of the directors in the political- social context, and comedy films, in which those aims are somewhat sublimated. In relation to the selected films for this thesis, priority is given to the works oriented in immediate post-war period. In this literature review, I have separated three main parts; a synopsis of cinematic neorealism, the Italian comic tradition, and woman in neorealist cinema, respectively. Additionally, for the third part, I devote a subsection to feminist film theory.

#### 1.1.1 Synopsis of Cinematic Neorealism

Several researchers have devoted themselves to the monumental task of investigating the history of Italian cinema as a whole. Amongst these scholars Peter Bondanella's pioneering and comprehensive book *Italian Cinema: From Neorealism*

*to the Present*<sup>19</sup>; is essential to focus on the Anglo- American studies on Italian cinema. In his book, after a brief introduction; which includes the silent era and the Fascist period, Bondanella presents his readers with considerably detailed history of Italian cinema to the present. When theorizing the cinematic neorealism, Bondanella shares similar attitudes with Marcia Landy and Mary P. Wood. The neorealist directors had a social agenda; the problems of the society after the war were their main concern “but there was never a programmatic approach to these questions or any preconceived method of rendering them on celluloid.”<sup>20</sup> The acknowledged characteristics of neorealism were listed in Wood’s *Italian Cinema* as;

In 1952 the Paris journal, *Film et documents* published its ‘Ten points of neorealism’ by which neorealism could be classified. These were ‘ (1) a message; (2) topical scripts inspired by concrete events – great historical and social issues are tackled from the point of the common people; (3) a sense of detail as means of authentication; (4) a sense of the masses and the ability to manipulate them in front of the camera; (5) realism; (6) the truth of actors, often non-professionals; (7) the truth of lightning; (8) the truth of décor and refusal of the studio; (9) photography, reminiscent of the reportage style stressing the impression of truth; an extremely free camera, its unrestricted movements resulting from the use of postsynchronization’.<sup>21</sup>

In spite of the fact that these characteristics are given as *sine qua non*, Wood, Bondanella and Landy agree that “no neorealist films showed all of these

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<sup>19</sup>Peter Bondanella, *Italian Cinema: From Neorealism to the Present*, third, revised edition (New York: The Continuum International Publishing, 2001)

<sup>20</sup> Peter Bondanella, *Italian Cinema: From Neorealism to the Present*, third, revised edition (New York: The Continuum International Publishing, 2001) 34

<sup>21</sup>Mary P. Wood, *Italian Cinema* (Oxford ; N.Y. : Berg, 2005) 89

characteristics.”<sup>22</sup> In addition to that not all the films produced during the post-war period could be accepted as a neorealist picture. “The most surprising statistic that emerges from an analysis of the style or content of the some 822 films produced in Italy between 1945 and 1953 is that only about 90 (or slightly over 10%) could ever be called neorealist films.”<sup>23</sup> I will employ these features to analyze the films principally. However how the directors deal with the significant social problems through comic mode will be my main concern regarding cultural juncture.

Understanding the fact that not all films during the postwar period, which uses on-location shooting or natural lightning as a result of financial restrictions, could be labeled as neorealist. The neorealist directors such as Rossellini, Vittorio De Sica, Giuseppe De Santi and Pietro Germi tried to capture the changing lives of ordinary people in a country that was still suffering from the war effects, both politically and economically. However, Brunetta argues that “From the outset, neorealist cinema and the people who defined it did not want simply to be the recording and the mimesis of the existing world.”<sup>24</sup> He explains this emerging style as “deconstruction of traditional storytelling but it sought to depict and explore the many dimensions of the real, including dreams, the fantastic, and the imagination”.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 89

<sup>23</sup>Peter Bondanella, *Italian Cinema: From Neorealism to the Present*, third, revised edition (New York: The Continuum International Publishing, 2001) 35

<sup>24</sup>Gian Piero Brunetta, *The history of Italian cinema : a guide to Italian film from its origins to the twenty-first century* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 2009) 126

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 126

André Bazin, a world famous film critic and film theorist, and the co-founder of *Cahiers du cinema*, states that “indeed, art aims to go beyond reality, not to reproduce it.”<sup>26</sup> In order to understand cinematic neorealism deeply, Bazin’s articles and reviews are substantially important. He provides an extensive insight into the origins of cinematic neorealism and his critiques of many films that were produced in this period are pioneering for film scholars. Bazin describes Italian neorealism as “the expression of an entire moral or ethical philosophy, as well, and not simply just another new cinematic style”.<sup>27</sup> From this perspective, the reason why I try to investigate the themes and the context of neorealism, rather than its stylistic characteristics, is to analyze the selected films of this thesis, and whether they contribute to the social aims of neorealism within a comic mode. At this point it is essential to understand the main subjects of the neorealist films and how they handled in comedy films. Bondanella points out that “neorealists turned to the pressing problems of the time – the war, the Resistance and Partisan struggle, unemployment, poverty, social injustice, and the like...”<sup>28</sup> However, overemphasis upon the social realism would be wrong. The neorealists were dealing with the social problems, but they were creating a poetic cinematic language as well. “... The greatest neorealist directors never forgot that the world they projected upon silver screen was one produced by cinematic conventions rather than an ontological

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<sup>26</sup>Bert Cardullo, *André Bazin and Italian neorealism* (New York : Continuum, 2011) 107

<sup>27</sup>Ibid. 19

<sup>28</sup>Peter Bondanella, *Italian Cinema: From Neorealism to the Present*, third, revised edition (New York: The Continuum International Publishing, 2001) 3

experience, and they were never so naïve as to deny that the demands of an artistic medium such as film might be as pressing as those from the world around them.”<sup>29</sup>

During the neorealist period the only person who used the word “neorealism” was Cesare Zavattini. Arguably, he is known as a theoretician, a writer of more than hundred films, and a collaborator of important directors such as Vittorio De Sica, Roberto Rossellini, Federico Fellini, Luchino Visconti and many others. In his essay *Some Ideas on the Cinema*, Zavattini explains the difference between neorealism and American cinema as “the cinema’s overwhelming desire to see, to analyze, its hunger for reality, is in act of concrete homage towards other people, towards what is happening and existing in the world”. According to him Italian cinema should be opposed to the classical Hollywood narratives and cinematic ideals. To achieve this, Zavattini believes that the neorealist directors need primarily ‘social attention’. Many scholars and film critics find Zavattini’s notion of neorealism capturing reality considerably strict. The neorealist directors were aware of the relationship between fiction and reality. However Carlo Celli and Marga Cottino-Jones shares Zavattini’s view that “the greatness of neorealism lies in the fact that it managed a detailed portrayal of the contemporary Italian sociopolitical situation”. My review of Zavattini’s theorization of neorealism focuses upon his discussion of telling the story of contemporary situations and people, and the moral responsibility of filmmakers.

From another point of view Ennio Di Nolfo claims that “Thus, realism, which until 1943 had been linked to the Fascist experience, was re-baptized and called “neorealism,” but its roots were deeply embedded in the Italian film industry’s

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 34



development dating back to 1931”.<sup>30</sup> According to him, the characteristics of neorealism such as “on-site filming and the use of non-professional actors” had already been used during the fascist period. The main difference in neorealism was that the photographic style, but Nolfo asserts that the reason for using “low-sensitivity film stock” was due to the circumstances of the time. Although he points out the relation between the films of the Fascist period and neorealism in many technical ways, he still fails to address the neorealist directors’ aim in terms of social attention and their ethical questioning.

Despite their diverse approaches and conclusions, each of these readings has its own merits. However, what become clear in surveying the existing scholars is the gap in literature that lacks attention to the comic vein and the female characters roles in the films’ narratives. While authors only slightly touch on the comic elements of these films, merely mentioning the warm-hearted Italian humor, my thesis goes further and talks about serious social issues in the comic film form, in addition to the role of women in selected films. Analyses of these films add to our understanding of comedy film’s handling of social issues as well as our views on the changing representations of female characters.

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<sup>30</sup>Ennino Di Nolfo, “Intimations of Neorealism in the Fascist Ventennio” in *Re-viewing Fascism: Italian Cinema, 1922-1943* edited by Jacqueline Reich and Piero Garofalo (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002) 102

### 1.1.2 The Italian Comic Tradition

The second part of the chapter is devoted to having closer look at the comic tradition in Italy. Comedy film as a genre has suffered from relatively critical and theoretical neglect in film studies for too long. Before examining the comedy films in neorealism, it is necessary to look at the Fascist period comedy films to see the development in the genre. To have a closer look, one should consider what has been changed or what has been inherited from the Fascist period to the postwar cinema. Marcia Landy points out that those Italian comedy films of the Fascist era that were labeled “escapist” and “white telephone” were influenced mostly by Hollywood styles and contemporary European, (mostly Hungarian) comedies. The main function of these comedy films was to “mask serious conflicts” and their reliance on indirect discourse.<sup>31</sup> In other words, the films of the Fascist period were either not touching any social problems of the time, or only speaking about them from the ideological perspective of the state. The reason for entitling these films as ‘white telephone’ comedies, which were mainly associated with bourgeois theatrical tradition and shot in studios, is that they had white telephones in the living-rooms as an obligatory object.

As a formal, iconic feature of Italian films during the 1930s, the white telephone was said to have displayed the opulence, monochromatic luminescence, and social privilege of modern, bourgeois settings/characters/dialogue. As such, it was also perceived as a powerful and

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<sup>31</sup>Marcia Landy, *The folklore of consensus : theatricality in the Italian cinema, 1930-1943* (Albany : State University of New York Press, 1998) 45

pervasive sign of the “escapism” of these films, white telephones were at the center of a utopia that “captivated,” “distracted,” and “concealed from” the audiences of the films.<sup>32</sup>

Even though the *telefono bianco* films seem trivial, the cinematic style of the 1930s acknowledged as the precursors of the neorealism. Among several directors, Mario Camerini was identified with these kinds of romantic comedy films of the period. Both Vittorio De Sica and Cesare Zavattini, the leading exponents of neorealism, began their careers with Camerini. De Sica acted as the main lead in many of Camerini’s comedy films such as *Men What Rascals!* (1932), *I’ll Give a Million*, and *Il Signor Max* (1937). Camerini’s influence on both De Sica and Zavattini was mostly through his themes. “But the trajectory from Camerini to De Sica and Zavattini is most clearly evident in their use of plot elements.”<sup>33</sup> Carlo Celli and Marga Cottino-Jones argue that “some films of the 1930s had a production style and thematic content that presaged many pre-neorealist themes of the 1940s, especially those deriving from the naturalistic or *verismo* currents in Italian literature.”<sup>34</sup> Wagstaff and Landy support the view of Celli; neorealists intend to show ordinary people’s lives. The directors owe a lot to the comedy films of 1930s

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<sup>32</sup> Jacqueline Reich and Piero Garofalo, *Re-viewing Fascism: Italian Cinema, 1922-1943*, ed. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002) 115

<sup>33</sup> Carlo Celli and Marga Cottino-Jones, *A new guide to Italian cinema* (New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 58

<sup>34</sup>Ibid. 32

and 1940s.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, the *commedia all'italiana* (comedy Italian style) of the 1950s and 1960s was shaped mostly by the white telephone tradition.

When it comes to the subject of Italian comedy films of neorealism, the effects of theatrical tradition *commedia dell'arte* is clear. Wagstaff identifies two types of comedy: the *commedia brillante*, derived from Austro- Hungarian theater and film comedies, with its brittle dialogue and its focus on the comedies of misrecognition; and *commedia sentimentale*, with its focus on a more emotional, domestic, even melodramatic view of the conflicts experienced and resolved for and by the protagonists.<sup>36</sup>

“Consistently undervalued by film critics, especially those on the left who believe that the comedy’s popularity deflects attention from more ‘serious’ social problems, the Italian comic film nevertheless treated such questions quite courageously and ran afoul of the censors as often as films in a strictly dramatic vein.”<sup>37</sup> The biggest problem with comedy films is that they are usually treated as being not ‘serious’. However, comedy has the ability to draw attention to sensitive subjects without being risky. In some cases, criticizing can only reach an audience with the help of comedy. Three categories of comedy, defined by Gerald Mast as

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<sup>35</sup>Christopher Wagstaff, “Cinema”, in David Forgacs and Robert Lumley, ed., *Italian Cultural Studies: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) 216-33, quoted in Marcia Landy’s *Italian Film*, 99.

<sup>36</sup>Christopher Wagstaff, “Cinema”, in David Forgacs and Robert Lumley, ed., *Italian Cultural Studies: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) 216-33, quoted in Marcia Landy’s *Italian Film*, 99.

<sup>37</sup>Peter Bondanella, *Italian Cinema: From Neorealism to the Present*, third, revised edition (New York: The Continuum International Publishing, 2001) 145

“ironic comedy”, “explicit and intellectual comedy”, and “implied comedy”, help me analyze how comedy films present meanings.

This thesis departs from scholarship that claims comedy films in neorealism were unable to address the serious problems of contemporary Italian society, compared with the drama films of the period. Roy Armes claims that “these films are acceptable commercial products, designed for a large public and achieving great success at the box office, but they represent a trivialization of neorealism”<sup>38</sup>. However, these films are very much a reaction to the socio-political situation of Italy during that particular time period. The comic mode of their narrative gives them the ability to touch sensitive areas, and reach wider audiences as well. Their tone in voicing criticism to the current situation is apparently different than such examples as *Bicycle Thieves* of De Sica or Rossellini’s *Rome, Open City*. But we should accept that drama as a genre is not the only way of showing social attention.

After reviewing the available literature on neorealism and comedy films of the period, my position most closely resembles Bondanella. As he asserts, comic films treated 'serious' social problems in a considerably courageous way, so that they could avoid censorship.

### 1.1.3 Woman in Neorealist Cinema

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<sup>38</sup>Roy Armes, *Patterns of Realism* (South Brunswick, A.S. Barnes ,1971) 179

The preoccupation of the comedy genre with the modernization of Italy leads to a change in cinematic focus of woman's roles from rural to urban. Particularly, during the fascist period, female figures are mostly constructed in family spheres as "fascist ideology encouraged women to serve through their roles as wives and mothers, subservient to men".<sup>39</sup> The fascists discourse on femininity mainly dealt with maintaining the women as mothers to reproduce good citizens for the nation and their role "as national reproductive agents means a denial of desire, a dematerialization of their bodies, and their transformation into an abstract entity known as the mother".<sup>40</sup> At the same time the Catholic morality was constructing a similar gender representation with the state ideology.

On the other hand during the fascist regime, the other traditional role that was assigned to women was prostitute, in other words providers of sex for fascist males. Marga Cottino-Jones points out those documentaries such as *Madri d'Italia* (Mothers of Italy, 1934) and *Figli d'Italia: caduti in Africa* (Sons of Italy: Fallen in Africa, 1928) were clearly visualizing the gender roles that the fascist regime prescribed for its citizens.<sup>41</sup> The foremost aim of these documentaries, which were supported by LUCE (L'Unione Cinematografica Educativa), was to promote state ideology and the traditional gender roles that could serve the dominant codes of Fascism. The women's magazines *Eva* and *Lei* of the period were emphasizing a 'modern woman'

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<sup>39</sup>Mary P. Wood, *Italian Cinema* (Oxford; N.Y. : Berg, 2005) 159

<sup>40</sup>Marcia Landy, *Italian film* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 210

<sup>41</sup>Marga Cottino- Jones, *Women, Desire, and Power in Italian Cinema* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 38

image, which is more engaged with the work space rather than family or duty. Moreover, this new 'modern woman' was interested in fashion and beauty that created a 'selfishness' discourse. This new modern woman figure was also affected by the American stars system. "Even though the typical female movie star in the 1930s had little to do with Italian physical types, many women attempted to imitate the hair, makeup, attitude, and dress of stars, especially, but by no means only, women among the lower middle classes."<sup>42</sup> However, this modern image contradicted the traditional femininity discourse.

"The role of modernity in the 1930s and 1940s was highly ambivalent. While images of modernity exploited consumerism and while consumerism was inextricably linked to notions of gender and sexuality, these images were still closely fused to traditional conceptions of the family as a stabilizing force. In the vein of folklore, the new images were superimposed on the old. The affect generated by the cinema can be situated in a disorienting space between past and present."<sup>43</sup>

Although it is a challenging task I believe it is necessary to pursue as broad a reading of femininity in neorealist films as possible. The images of women in neorealist films were generally opposed to the star system of the 1930s and 1940s. However a generalization of femininity in neorealist films would be hard to make. Landy underscores the transformation in the images of woman as "the Italian postwar cinema was involved in redeeming Italian 'reality' from the ravages of

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<sup>42</sup>Stephan Gundle, "Film Stars and Society in Fascist Italy" in *Re-viewing Fascism: Italian Cinema, 1922-1943* edited by Jacqueline Reich and Piero Garofalo (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002) 321

<sup>43</sup> Marcia Landy, *The folklore of consensus : theatricality in the Italian cinema, 1930-1943* (Albany : State University of New York Press, 1998) 26

Fascism and World War II, and the figure of woman as a signifier of the regenerated nation plays a role in this reclamation”.<sup>44</sup> Female identity became more sexualized than the prior standard female roles and attributes.

Marga Cottina-Jones explains femininity in neorealist films by examining woman figures in selected films by Rossellini, Mario Mattoli, Luigi Zampa, Vittorio De Sica, Antonioni, Francesco Di Santi, respectively. She defines female characters in these films as “victims of social unfairness”, successful “in gaining heroic status”, or showing “a resistance to traditionally codified roles of female behavior”. Although Cottina-Jones’ deductions try to clarify the positions of female subjects in neorealist pictures, the diversity in these depictions are apparent. The rejection of the traditional roles, particularly compared to the Fascist period, and opposition to the patriarchal ideology are visible in some of the examples such as *Rome, Open City* or *L’Onorevole Angelina*. However, the diversity in the representation of femininity in the immediate postwar cinema precludes any kind of generalization. However, shifts and developments in the discourse of the films, in contrast with the fascist period, are apparent. In examples of *Paisà* (Roberto Rossellini, 1946) and *Riso amaro* (Giuseppe De Santis, 1947), the female protagonists are depicted as sexualized bodies, and on the other hand as female workforce. “Although femininity takes many forms through the portraits of woman as - femme fatale, mother, wife, entertainer, prostitute – these forms are often united in representing the feminine as a threatening and problematic force.”<sup>45</sup> Cottina-Jones’ observations about the representation of woman in neorealist

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 279

<sup>45</sup> Marcia Landy, *The folklore of consensus theatricality in the Italian cinema, 1930-1943* (Albany : State University of New York Press, 1998) 262



period provide useful insight into how the discourses of femininity have changed after the war. The diversity of female representation in neorealism present a divisive issue for film criticism. Therefore, I find a reading of feminist film theory necessary.

#### 1.1.4 Feminist Film Theory

This section of the literature review traces the development of feminist film theory. It then gives an overview of the femininity and how semiotics and psychoanalysis can be used to analyze women's representation in the selected films. My review mainly covers British theorists, as I find their approach sought to analyze the deeper codes in filmic representations of women.

Feminist perspectives on film emerged in the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and was mostly shaped by the women's liberation movement. Feminists first dealt with film in the US from a sociological perspective, which focused on the images of women and the society primarily. However British theorists took it a step further and began to establish new theoretical discourses. One of the most significant shifts in feminist film theory began with Claire Johnston, whose work highlighted semiotics' usefulness as a tool for film analysis. In *Notes on Women's Cinema*, Johnston employ Roland Barthes' notion of 'myth' in order to reveal 'myths of women' in the cinema. "Myth then, as a form of speech or discourse, represents the major means in which women have been used in the cinema: myth transmits and transforms the ideology of sexism and renders it

invisible –when it is made visible it evaporates –and therefore natural.”<sup>46</sup> Her contribution to feminist film analysis is that Woman as a ‘sign’ in the patriarchal discourse has been constructed with connotative meanings such as ‘Woman as Other’, ‘the object for the male desire’ or ‘Woman as Mother’. For the analysis of the selected films of this thesis, Johnston’s ‘myths of woman’ provide helpful insights into the female characters and what they signify in the narrative of the films. This sign ‘woman’ should be analyzed to determine if it represents an ideological meaning.

Another aspect of the feminist film theory is the ‘male gaze’, which subsequently became the main concept in feminist film debate. In Laura Mulvey’s article *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, (written in 1973 and published in British film magazine *Screen* in 1975), she argues that the controlling gaze in cinema is always male. Thus, the representation of woman in classical Hollywood cinema is intended to satisfy the male gendered spectator’s pleasure, and the patriarchal point of view is dominant. Mulvey uses psychoanalysis as a main tool, heavily influenced by the theories of Jacques Lacan. She argues that cinema appeals to the spectator’s unconscious in two ways. First, scopophilia (pleasure in looking), in which an active subject derives pleasure in looking at a passive object and this voyeurism connotes women as ‘to-be-looked-at-ness’. Second, Mulvey adds narcissistic aspect of pleasure in looking by Lacan’s concept of mirror stage; constitution of ego through identification or fascination with the image seen. In her follow-up essay

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<sup>46</sup>Claire Johnston “Women’s Cinema as Counter Cinema” in *Feminist Film Theory: A Reader* edited by Sue Thornham (Edinburg University Press: Edinburg, 1999) 32

‘Afterthoughts on Visual Pleasures and Narrative Cinema’ she reviews the concept of the female spectator, which her first essay does not initially take into consideration. From another point of view, Mary Ann Doanne addresses the concept of the female spectator in ‘Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator’ in two ways: as one “who finds herself either too close (absorbed in her own image as the object of narcissistic desire) or too far (assuming the alienated distance necessary to identify with the male voyeur) –in relation to the classical text”<sup>47</sup>.

In her foundational essay ‘The Technologies of Gender’, Teresa de Lauretis rethinks the concept of ‘sexual difference’. She sought to understand the differences, both socially and sexually, among women. According to De Lauretis, women –as real social beings –are not the same as ‘the Woman’.<sup>48</sup> In her essay, she analyzes Federico Fellini’s film *Giulietta degli spiriti / Juliet of the Spirits* (1965) and shows how the housewife Juliet embodies the figure of woman as a real social being, whereas the pretty mistress Susy is depicted as the image of the Woman. De Lauretis argues that the problem of feminist thinking is “the conceptual opposition between man and woman, which is already embedded within patriarchal society and its discourses”.<sup>49</sup>

Reviewing the literature in feminist film theory helps us to understand the function of the female characters in the films and which kind of spectator is implied.

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<sup>47</sup>Robert Stam, Robert Burgoyne and Sandy Flitterman-Lewis *New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics: Structuralism, Post-structuralism, and beyond* (Routledge: London, 1992) 177

<sup>48</sup> When De Lauretis uses the ‘Woman’ it refers to the image of women in films.

<sup>49</sup>Teresa de Lauretis *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987) 1

Within the narrative are the male characters directing their gaze towards these female characters or are there other possibilities of spectatorship in the films?

## 1.2 METHODOLOGY

In this section of the study I will elaborate on how the research will be carried on and which methodologies will be used throughout the study. The sampling method will be explained as well.

### 1.2.1 Textual Analysis

Textual analysis is used for this study in order to understand how the strategies and techniques of the selected films convey meaning to the audience. Using textual analysis, each film will be broken into its technical elements such as camera, editing, lighting and *mise-en-scène*, and will be reconstructed again to determine how these elements work together in order to create meaning. Textual analysis also requires an understanding of how film fits into the larger context of historical, social, and political environments. The primary aim of this study is to consider to what extent the comedy films in the immediate postwar neorealist period manage to touch the significant sociopolitical themes that the neorealists aim to expound upon. In order to answer this question, textual analysis of the individual films is used.

### 1.2.2 Defining the Comic Structures

To study and define the comic essence of the films, I will employ Gerald Mast's theoretical framework. According to him the comic film has eight basic plots, in other words eight structures.<sup>50</sup> These are briefly, young lovers finally wed despite many obstacles, intentional parody or burlesque of some other film or genre films, the *reductio ad absurdum*, an investigation of the workings of a particular society, journey of a picaresque hero, improvised or anomalous gaggery, performing or forced to accept a difficult task, and central figure discovers an error he has been committing. In each film analysis, firstly I will give plot summaries of the films; in order to reveal whether they fit into Mast's comic plot structures. Furthermore, his views about the construction of comic climate, which means how films signal that they are comedies, will be used in defining the comic mode in films. According to him, the title of the film, the characters, particularly the familiar comedians or comic characters, the subject matter of the film, and dialogues give clues to the audience to realize the comic climate of the film. In order to understand how comedies convey messages, Mast's categorizations of 'ironic', 'explicit' or 'implied' comedies will be used as well. By means of these categories, I will analyze the ways of voicing a critique about sociopolitical themes.

Various factors have contributed to the selection of these films. All of these films were produced in the immediate postwar period. As the 1940s and early 1950s

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<sup>50</sup>Gerald Mast, *The comic mind; comedy and the movies* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973) 8

are identified with neorealism, I selected comedy films from this period to understand, despite their comic climate, how they serve the aim of neorealist principles and contain neorealist characteristics. The well-known comedy films of the period, Vittorio De Sica's *Miracle in Milan* and Roberto Rossellini's *The Machine That Kills Bad People* are omitted, as both films are accepted as the paramount of neorealism. The role of the female characters in the narrative of the films is the other major criterion that determined which films would be selected for this study. The women represented in the films range in age from adolescent to young adult. The main motivation for choosing this demographic is to observe women in the process of forming and negotiating gender. As a final parameter for establishing the corpus of cinematic artifacts, films dealing with themes such as poverty, the effects of war and class differences have been selected.

## CHAPTER II

### 2.1 Comedy and Poverty: Renato Castellani's *Due Soldi di Speranza* (1952)

Renato Castellani (1913-85) began his directing career during the Fascist period. One of his earlier films, *Un colpo di pistol* (A Pistol Shot, 1942), which is an adaptation taken from a story by Pushkin, is considered to be the best example of “calligraphy” films.

A number of directors turned between 1940 and 1943 to adaptations of late nineteenth–or early twentieth-century–naturalistic fiction. Italian film historians have generally defined these works by the label “calligraphy”, and their directors within the term “calligraphers”, underlining their interest in formalism, style, and by implication, their choice of themes from the past



history or literature rather than from contemporary Italian culture. The implicit criticism contained in the terms of “calligraphy” and “calligraphist” is perhaps unwarranted. While it may be true that these ‘calligraphers’ evaded contemporary issues in their adaptations of novels from the realist and naturalists periods, such literary inspiration would nevertheless be an important factor in neorealist films by these same critics.<sup>51</sup>

Later on Castellani pursued his career in the postwar period as well. His notable films during this period were *Under the Sun of Rome (Sotto il sole di Roma, 1948)*, *It is Spring (È primavera, 1949)*, *Two Cents’ Worth of Hope (Due soldi di speranza, 1952)*, respectively.

These films by Castellani were branded as *Neorealismo rosa* (pink neorealism) as they have a comic vein and highlighted the emotional demands of the narrative. Left-wing critics of the society undervalued them as ignoring the socialist political agenda. However, Gian Piero Brunetta claims that “at the time, leftist critics (and as a result, subsequent critics and historiographers) have wrongly branded this film as the father of ideological dissolution and so-called pink neorealism.... His characters’ only legacy was that they had heart.”<sup>52</sup> From this perspective, the emotional side of Castellani’s films detracts from his contribution to social issues, especially when compared to that of other neorealist directors.

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<sup>51</sup> Peter Bondanella, *Italian Cinema: From Neorealism to the Present*, third, revised edition (New York: The Continuum International Publishing, 2001) 21

<sup>52</sup>Gian Piero Brunetta, *The history of Italian cinema : a guide to Italian film from its origins to the twenty-first century* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 2009) 143

Before beginning to the close textual analysis I find it helpful to give a plot summary of Castellani's *Two Cents Worth of Hope*, as to give the audience brief explanation to familiarize with the actions and the characters.

The story of young Carmela and Antonio is set in a small village near Naples. The film begins with Antonio's coming home from military service. Antonio lives with his mother, his elder sister Giulia, and five younger sisters. As he is responsible to take care of his poor family, he immediately looks for a job. Carmela is the daughter of Don Pasquale, a firecracker manufacturer. Carmela falls in love with Antonio. Antonio seems uninterested in Carmela at first, and Carmela tries everything to attract him. Antonio finds temporary jobs such as bottling soda at a café, selling lettuce in the market, driving buses, and many others. Most of the time, Antonio loses his job because of Carmela's jealous and childish behaviors. One day Don Pasquale invites Antonio to dinner. Antonio secretly hopes that Don Pasquale will offer to hire him. But on the contrary, Don Pasquale tells Antonio that he would never let his daughter marry an unemployed man. Later, Antonio finds a job in Naples, where he works for a woman who owns several movie theaters. There Antonio is responsible for carrying film reels from one theater to another. At the same time, he donates his blood to his boss' sick boy. When Carmela runs away from home to see Antonio, she fights with his boss, so that Antonio loses his job yet again. By the time Antonio arrives back to the village, he finds out that his sister Giulia has had a relationship with a man. The family tries to find a solution. The Priest mediates an agreement between the families, and Antonio begins to work at the Church to save up money for Giulia's dowry. At night, he secretly works for the Communists to collect money for his marriage with Carmela. But again, because Carmela talks about

his night job, and Antonio is subsequently accused of being a Communist, he lost both his jobs. Carmela runs away from home, and goes to Verona. Antonio finds her and brings her back. But Don Pasquale throws her belongings from the house, and would not let her in. The villagers support Antonio and Carmela. In the last scene, they all gather together and walk to the Church for the young lover's wedding.

*Two Cents' Worth of Hope* is accepted as Renato Castellani's best and most popular film, which received the Grand Prize at the Cannes Film Festival in 1952. The basic plot is the story of two poor young lovers in a village, Antonio and Carmela. Antonio Catalano, played by Vincenzo Musolino, is discharged from the military service and returns back to his home village. With a mother and five young sisters to take care of, he starts looking for a job. The main theme of the film is undoubtedly unemployment, which was the major problem in Italy after the war. The subplots of 110 minutes long picture is shaped by Antonio's short-termed employments and his relationship with Carmela. In the very beginning of the film, we see Antonio and many other men of his age, waiting at the Church's gate for a job. Although the choices are limited, Antonio is eager to have any job, even if the wages are only slightly more than the unemployment compensation. Even though the money is not enough, the family desperately needs it. At the same time this is the scene where we see Carmela showing her affection to Antonio for the first time, but Antonio does not even recognize who she is. Initially Carmela's affection seems one-sided as Antonio's biggest concern is about taking care of his family. But Carmela is stubborn, no matter how discouraging the obstacles. Although Antonio seems reluctant, she never gives up and finally Antonio can no longer resist her love. Carmela tries every opportunity to allure Antonio: she cuts her hair when Antonio

makes fun of her tails, she lights up all her father's firecrackers when Antonio sends any letters from Naples, or she runs away from home just to get his attention. Eventually, this contradictory relationship between Antonio and Carmela turns into a love story.

The script is structured around a series of episodes as defined by Antonio's short-term jobs. However "the events don't stretch along an *a priori* continuum; they follow one another accidentally, like events in real life."<sup>53</sup> The focus on contemporary subject matter, the effects of the war and unemployment is combined with the youngster's love. The use of non-professional actors and local people increases the authenticity of the film. From this point of view, the regional dialect that Castellani mixes with the standard Italian is one of main characteristics that the picture shares with the Neorealist tradition. "Dialect is nearer to reality."<sup>54</sup> Zavattini claims that to be truer, the neorealist directors should maintain the dialect's syntax. As his biggest concern was to "excavate reality" and to "penetrate more and more into the manifestations and the essence of reality", the use of dialect in dialogues in *Due soldi di speranza* brings such kind of authenticity.<sup>55</sup> The film is set in a village near Naples and many nonprofessional actors are used, including one of the main characters of the film, Antonio's mother. Such casting intensifies the realistic essence of the film as they all speak with the Neapolitan dialect. In the scene when Antonio

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<sup>53</sup>Bert Cardullo, *André Bazin and Italian neorealism* (New York : Continuum, 2011) 109

<sup>54</sup>Cesare Zavattini, "Some Ideas on the Cinema", *Sight and Sound*, October, 1953, 60

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, 60

goes to the police station to inform them that he is back from military service and would like to sign the required papers, the officer scorns him about his language.

Officer: In eleven months that you have been in the city, you haven't learned how to speak Italian yet?

Antonio: Sir, if I were to speak correctly, I'd do the figure of the fool. But if I speak my way they understand me.

Officer: And everyone else, how do they understand?

Antonio: They bring their ears closer and understand me.

The dialogue in this scene makes it clear even for the non-Italian speaking audience that Antonio speaks with a dialect. He is a common man living in village and Castellani stresses this fact. One of the basic distinctions between neorealism and the prewar cinematic style is that the artificial themes and mostly manipulation of events. Here, in *Due soldi di speranza*, the organic development of situations intensify the genuine essence of the story.

The entire film revolves around Antonio's short-termed jobs and his evolving relationship with Carmela. As the film opens with Antonio's homecoming from the military service, the first thing that his mother complains about is the scarcity of jobs in the village. In the following scene, when the whole family is about to have dinner, a policeman enters and accuses Antonio's mother of stealing a rabbit. In the very beginning of film, despite its comic tone, we realize the poverty and tough life in the

village. “A major element of the ‘newness’ of neorealism was the strong commitment to the immediate sociopolitical situation. As different as the neorealist films are, they all share the mission of inviting our solidarity for those ‘who suffer and hope’ in an everyday life dominated by social injustice and economic inequity”.<sup>56</sup> The main accusation against the neorealist directors was that neorealism only describes poverty. Zavattini replies to this accusation: “We have begun with poverty for the simple reason that it is one of the most vital realities of our time, and I challenge anyone to prove the contrary.”<sup>57</sup> Since the neorealist directors seek to show ordinary people’s lives, it was inevitable to show poverty in their films at the times of pervasive postwar tensions. The representation of poverty that is characterized by the postwar condition of Italy functions also as a counterargument to the Fascist depictions of modernization, and to the luxurious and satisfying life in *telefono bianco* films. This unifying symbol of poverty “...acts as a response to Fascist valorizations of urban and rural life. It is no surprise that images of destitution and economic hardship are almost entirely absent from Fascist depictions of society”.<sup>58</sup> In neorealist films, this idealized representation of urban luxury is reviewed through a realistic representation of urban poverty. In *Due soldi di speranza*, between enjoyable characters and humorous climate, the primary problem of the nation, poverty, is apparent.

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<sup>56</sup> Marga Cottino- Jones, *Women, Desire, and Power in Italian Cinema* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 54

<sup>57</sup> Cesare Zavattini, “Some Ideas on the Cinema”, *Sight and Sound*, October, 1953, 55

<sup>58</sup> Brent J. Piepergerdes, “Re-envisioning the Nation: Film Neorealism and the Postwar Italian Condition”, *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 6(2), 231-257

It is no surprise that the theme of unemployment shapes the storyline of the picture. The main reason for the postponed marriage of young lovers is that Carmela's father is against it as Antonio has no proper job. In comparison to Antonio's, Carmela's family is richer. When Carmela's father, Pasquale, invites Antonio to talk about their relationship, Antonio secretly hopes that he would give him a job in his business. But Pasquale insults him and depreciates the marriage. Although Antonio says that he no longer wants Carmela, he keeps on trying to find a job, buys furniture and saves up money to get married to Carmela.

While Antonio's main challenge is to find a job, his temporary jobs form the script. He works in ten different jobs during the film. At first he has jobs in the village such as bottling sodas at a café or selling lettuces in bazaar. Then he helps the horse-drawn carriages, as the horses are too old and the roads are too steep, he pulls the horses to the hills. With the help of Antonio the horse drivers unite, form a cooperative and buy a bus. Antonio starts working as a chauffeur. In the following scenes, he works at the Church by day and at night he flees to the city and works with the partisans to put posters on the streets for the strike. One night Carmela follows him and learns what he does. As she blurts out that he works for the Communist, Antonio loses his job at the Church. Later on, Antonio moves away to Naples and works as a blood donor, at the same time he carries reels to cinemas. But again, because of Carmela he loses his job and returns to the village. All these job adventures show an ordinary man's struggle to survive during the economic stagnation in Italy after the war. The endemic nature of poverty is depicted through a comic lens. Antonio's desperate attempts to earn money is portrayed in a love story and lightened up with comic characters and dialogues. André Bazin mentions that

“this pure masterpiece, although its tone is quite different from that of *Bicycle Thieves*, proves once again that the Italian cinema has managed to discover a new relationship between the realistic calling of film and the eternal demands of dramatic poetry”.<sup>59</sup> Despite the comic climate of the film, *Due soldi di speranza* clearly convey the neorealist intent of depicting the social problems of contemporary Italy.

One of the other important aspects of *Due soldi di speranza* is that it provides a representation of conflict between the Church and the Partisanship during the 1950s. When it comes out that Antonio works with the Communists, he loses his job at the Church. Moreover, Antonio’s sister’s marriage arrangement is canceled and the villagers condemned the whole family as being Communists. However, Castellani portrays this conflict implicitly in a comic mode. The depiction of the Priest in these scenes is old, fat and insensitive, whereas the Communists are shown as young and hopeful comrades. Gerald Mast claims:

To recapitulate, comic films, because of their “worthlessness” and often deliberately flaunted incredibility, detach the emotion of the spectator from the illusion of the work, leaving the intellect free to perceive the issues of the work. The spectator perceives those issues either by (1) inferring them from the intentional ironies and incongruities of the film; (2) seeing and perhaps hearing those issues specifically represented; (3) or inferring them from unstated but implied values on which characters and events of the film are based.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Bert Cardullo, *André Bazin and Italian neorealism* (New York : Continuum, 2011) 107

<sup>60</sup> Gerald Mast, *The comic mind; comedy and the movies* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill , 1973) 18



Despite the humor and pleasure, the film serves its ideas about sociopolitical postwar tension by portraying the challenges of ordinary peasant life in the southern part of Italy. In addition to the youngster's love, their union is impeded mainly by an endemic problem of Italy: poverty and unemployment. However, the story concludes on a note of hope rather than desperation.

In order to understand how Castellani creates the comic essence of the film, a closer look at the plot and the narrative structure is necessary. According to Gerald Mast, there are eight comic plots, eight basic structures in film comedies. The first and most often used, particularly in Hollywood films, is that "...the young lovers finally wed despite the obstacles (either within themselves or external) to their union. Boy meets girl; boy loses girl; boy gets girl. Many twists and surprises have been injected into this structure..."<sup>61</sup> In *Due soldi di speranza*, the main obstacle to the youngster's union is the unemployment and poverty of Antonio. Even when he finds a job and start saving up money, his sister's dowry problem occurs. However, after many fights between Antonio and Carmela, and many other external problems such as hostile families, or lack of money, the two youngsters finally unite.

Castellani constructs the comic mode through a series of comic dialogues and characters, but also through several sight gags. Noël Carrol defines sight gag as "a form of visual humor in which amusement is generated by the play of alternative interpretations projected by the image or image series".<sup>62</sup> Also he distinguishes sight

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<sup>61</sup> Gerald Mast, *The comic mind; comedy and the movies* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973) 4

<sup>62</sup> Noël Carrol, *Theorizing the Moving Image* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1996) 146

gag from verbal jokes that “the play of interpretation is often visually available to the audience simultaneously throughout the gag”.<sup>63</sup> In the scene when Antonio tries to bring the reels from one movie theater to another in a hurry, his boss Mrs. Angelini calls him urgently to home. As Antonio is the blood donor of Mrs. Angelini’s sick child, he has to go immediately. During these series of scenes, we see Antonio attempts to drink a glass of water, as he is running between one place to another hastily, but every time someone takes the glass from his hands. This particular action “drinking a glass of water” may not seem comic at all if we see it once. However, the action repeats three times and it is staged in such a way that events interpenetrate each other. Carroll identifies this type of sight gag, which he borrowed from Henri Bergson and adapted to cinema, as “the mutual interference or interpenetration of two (or more) series of events (or scenarios)”.<sup>64</sup>

According to Mast, the comic climate of films can be recognized through a series of cues that the filmmaker transmits to the audience indicating that the action takes place in a comic world. The title, the characters, and the subject matter might inform us of a comic climate.<sup>65</sup> However, the title of Castellani’s film *Due soldi di speranza*, which is translated in English as *Two Cents’ Worth of Hope*, is a quote from the movie itself, and reflect a more dramatic story than a comic one.

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<sup>63</sup> Noël Carrol, *Theorizing the Moving Image* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1996) 146

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. 28

<sup>65</sup> Gerald Mast, *The comic mind; comedy and the movies* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill , 1973) 10

Carmela, as being portrayed more independent than other female characters, leads direction of the film's narrative. Most of the memorable comic sequences of the film are constructed around Carmela. When she runs away from home to follow Antonio to the city, then returns, as a punishment she is chained by her feet to the bed. Her mother asks her where she was; she refuses to answer and instead she barks like a dog. In another scene, when Antonio loses his job again once more because of Carmela; she tries to drown herself in bucket of water. At the celebration of the opening of the new bus line, where Antonio starts working as the driver, Carmela steals sparklers from her father. After the celebration her father warns her that if she is the one who stole from him, he is going to slap her. Carmela pauses for a moment and tells him "Papa, slap me" and starts singing loudly. Neale and Krutnik suggest that "comedy, by its very nature, can be given freer reign. Absurd behavior is permitted, expected even. Outrageous coincidences or *deus ex machine* devices are acceptable to a greater extent than elsewhere".<sup>66</sup> Carmela's disruptive character messes things up, however the maintenance of logical narrative is sustained. The spectator sees Carmela's rebellious nature in the very beginning of the film, and learns to accept her distinctive behaviors throughout the picture.

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<sup>66</sup> Neale and Krutnik, *Popular Film and Television Comedy* (London: Routledge, 1990) 102



Fig. 1 – Carmela is chained up by her father

The final episode brings together a number of elements from the rest of the picture: here Antonio and Carmela come to Carmela's house in hope of Carmela's father's blessing, while the whole village watches them with curious eyes. But Pasquale throws away Carmela's belongings and tells Antonio that he will not give any money or job to him. Antonio gets furious, throws back Carmela's stuff and strips Carmela's clothes off, tossing her shoes to Pasquale. A series of shots show the young lovers and screaming villagers in turn, emphasizing that the people support Antonio's action. Then Antonio screams at Pasquale that he wants nothing from him and Carmela's only dowry will be her heart, while the crowd is applauding them. The young couple blends into the crowd. Antonio grabs a dress, stockings, and shoes for Carmela from a street seller on credit, promising to pay when he finds money. In the

concluding sequence, Antonio tells the people “He who has created us is not poor. If He wants us to live, He must feed us. If not, what are we doing here?” Along with the crowd, Antonio and Carmela walk to the Church holding hands, where we first saw them together at the beginning of the film. Here, Castellani shares the message of the film “two cents’ worth of hope” for the poor people under tough circumstances. In the final sequence, the leading characters blend in with the other villagers, which emphasizes that this is the story of an ordinary man from the crowd, not an exception. *Due soldi di speranza* reflects a typically neorealist message of human brotherhood, which stresses not only a love story, but also the conditions in postwar Italy.

### 2.1.1 Carmela, stubborn Juliet

In his review of *Due soldi di speranza*, André Bazin mentions the connection with Castellani’s following film *Romeo and Juliet* (1954), although there is no tragic ending as the latter. Not only has the hostility between the families, “but also and above all, because of extraordinary poetry of the sentiments and the passions, the thoroughly Shakespearean imagination that inspires them” evoked the similarities of these two films. The Juliet of *Due soldi di speranza*, the sixteen-year-old Carmela, played by Maria Fiore, is undoubtedly the most contradictory character of the film. She boldly shows her affection to Antonio no matter what the village murmurs.

Despite many difficulties, Carmela never sets back like other female characters in the film. Her love seems one-sided at first, as Antonio has bigger problems on his mind such as feeding his family. But Carmela never gives up, and finally wins his heart. While Carmela is beaten up by her father, chained up, and imprisoned at home, she still finds a way to see her beloved.

Castellani depicts two female characters around the same age, Carmela and Antonio's elder sister, Giulia. Of these two characters, Carmela is presented in a completely unique way, as she is the only woman in the film who completely protests against the patriarchal oppression. She shows a clear rebellion, while Antonio's sister shows absolute obedience. Further in the story, we learn that Giulia had an affair with an old man who she barely knows. Her family forces them to marry and she does not even say whether she wants it or not. In order to save the family honor, either Antonio should kill the man, or Giulia should marry him. When Antonio refuses to kill him, Giulia marries without any objection. Although the narrative structure of the film focuses upon Antonio and Carmela's relationship, these contrasting female characters highlight Carmela's resistance to the patriarchy. On the other hand, Giulia represents the traditional female role that is assigned to the woman. She has premarital sexual relationship with a man, and she is held at home until she gets married. In one scene, we see Giulia sitting outside of the house on a sunny day, and a neighbor tells her that people are passing therefore she has to go inside. And the neighbor adds that Giulia can sunbathe when she gets married, so Giulia obediently goes inside. Here, the traditional image of woman as submissive and passive is portrayed. The other apparent difference between these two female characters is that we hardly hear Giulia speaking, whereas Carmela sings loudly for almost the entire

film. Even when her father slaps her, she continues her song, which shows us that she resists the paternal authority figure.

Teresa De Lauretis claims that the main problem of feminist film theories is the primarily conceived sexual difference in binary opposition between ‘Man’ and ‘Woman’. This concept disallows analyzing differences among, and within women, which produces universalized concept of ‘Woman as Other from Man’. “Therefore, in such feminist discourses, as well as in patriarchal discourses, real historical women, who are engendered differently in terms of their experience of class, races, and sexual relations, are simply conflated with ‘the Woman’.”<sup>67</sup> Although a fictional character, Carmela as a woman can be seen as a real social being. On the other hand, Giulia represents the image of Woman, one who obeys the patriarchal authority and is oppressed by male dominance. The central female protagonist, Carmela, reacts against the male discourse, which physically and psychologically surrounds her. Her father slaps her many times throughout the film; even her lover slaps her as well. She is harassed by the villagers as being a sinner. Her femininity is presented as a threat to the world of the male protagonist and the social order.

The other two important female characters of the film are Antonio’s and Carmela’s mothers. Although they seem rather different than each other, they both represent the traditional female role as mothers. While Antonio’s noisy mother constantly talks about poverty or dowry, we hardly hear Carmela’s mother’s voice. Both of them are seen mostly in the domestic spheres; taking care of the children,

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<sup>67</sup> Shohini Chaudhuri, *Feminist film theorists : Laura Mulvey, Kaja Silverman, Teresa de Lauretis, Barbara Creed* (London ; New York : Routledge, 2006)

setting the table or cleaning the house. The main function of these maternity figures is the consolidation of the family. Carmela's mother for instance, is seen most of the time calming the father down when he gets angry to Carmela. She tries to settle the dispute between father and daughter. And she shows a total devotion to the family, particularly to her husband. Both mothers represent the traditional gender role ascribed to the women as a maternal figure, and naturalize the oppressed image of femininity in patriarchal Italian culture, and in the Catholic Church as well.

Among the female characters, Carmela and Antonio's mother are the only ones who support the comicality of the film. Antonio's mother is depicted as a loud, overweight, toothless woman, who is played by a non-professional actress. Even by her physicality, she draws a gesticulating caricature. Most of the time, we see her complaining about their poverty and misfortune, but at the same time she buys lottery tickets secretly with the money they have quite few. On the other hand, what makes this character comical is her sly behaviors. At first, we see her trying to fool the police to get away from stealing her neighbor's rabbit. She tells the police that she has caught the rabbit with her bare hands that day, and as a proof she shows an old, dried rabbit tail to him. In another scene, when Antonio hears about his sister's secret affair with an old man, his mother wants him to kill the old man to save the family honor. But Antonio rejects this, and once again, the mother makes up a ploy so that the old man accepts to wed Giulia. However, her little scam comes to light yet again. Especially the scene at the Church, where the priest tries to find a way to reconcile both mothers, Giulia's mother even tries to deceive the priest. Castellani's choice of a non-professional actress for this role enhances the authenticity of the



film. And the slyness of this character definitely provides richness to the comicality of the film.



Fig.2 – Dowry settlement at the Church

The film's ironic treatment of the leading female character Carmela is central to the construction of its comic climate. Carmela is represented in such a way that the audience becomes familiar with her disruptive, yet comic behaviors. The scene where Carmela is chained by her feet is one of most dramatic scenes of the film. But when her mother asks her where she has been, Carmela replies by barking like a dog. What makes this scene so comical is that it is an unexpected action. In addition to that what is behind this particular action is her reaction against her family's way of

treating her like an animal. Her absurd behavior, which usually has negative associations, becomes acceptable in Carmela's actions. From the very beginning of the film, Castellani shows us Carmela's free spirit, so that when she blows up all the fireworks, the audience finds this act comical, rather than irresponsible. Singing is also an important part of Carmela's character. Even under tough circumstances; when her father slaps her or imprisons her, she continues to sing her joyful songs loudly. The incongruity in these actions makes the scenes more humorous. The contrast between these two elements, singing when she gets slapped surprises the spectator, as it seems out of place. Castellani sets up expectation of crying or sadness, but delivers something that gives a surprise to the audience. In the *Critique of Judgment*, Immanuel Kant states the role of incongruity in humor as "In everything that is to excite a lively laugh there must be something absurd (in which the understanding, therefore, can find no satisfaction). Laughter is an affection arising from the sudden transformation of a strained expectation into nothing"<sup>68</sup> Thus Carmela's comicality is drawn most of time by the incongruity of her actions, which makes us laugh.

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<sup>68</sup>Immanuel Kant., *Critique of Judgment*. J. H. Bernard, Trans. (New York: Hafner, 1951) 133

## CHAPTER III

### 3.1 Comedy and War: Luigi Zampa's *Vivere in Pace* (1946)

Luigi Zampa (1905- 1991) is one of the filmmakers who began his directing career under the Fascist Regime, and continued making films after World War II. At age thirty-one, Zampa went to *Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia* in Rome, and became a director in 1941. Despite the fact that Zampa is well-known by his comedy films during the 1950s and 1960s, Gian Piero Brunetta stresses that “he has every right to be counted among the great masters of neorealist filmmaking”. In addition to that, Christopher Wagstaff underpins in his book *Italian Neorealist Cinema: An Aesthetic Approach*;

The figure who emerges as standing, from every point of view, smack in the centre of Italian cinema from 1945 to 1953 is Luigi Zampa. He received all influences, and emitted almost none. His films were produced by established mainstream companies. He is the least studied of all neorealists. Abroad, *Vivere in pace* was often considered, at the time, on par with *Roma città aperta*.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Christopher, Wagstaff, *Italian Neorealist Cinema: An Aesthetic Approach* (Toronto;

Among his other films during the immediate postwar period, *Vivere in Pace* (To Live in Peace; 1946), *L'onorevole Angelina* (Angelina: Member of Parliament; 1947), and *Anni Difficili* (Difficult Years; 1948) are exceptionally noteworthy. *L'onorevole Angelina* focuses upon a female protagonist, played by Anna Magnani that fights against social injustices and discrimination. As Marga Cottina-Jones claims; "It is not easy to find comic films, and especially comic films that focus on female protagonists in the late 1940s, just after the fall of fascism and at the end of World War II" and "this film shares with the neorealist movement an interest for characters living in difficult economic situations as victims of social injustice".<sup>70</sup> The primary concern of the picture is a woman taking power and voicing criticism to the problems. In fact, the theme that Zampa deploys in *L'onorevole Angelina* was quite convenient for those years, as in 1946 women had the vote for the first time in Italian history. For many scholars, *Anni Difficili* is accepted as Zampa's best film. The story of a minor government clerk in a Sicilian village, who is dealing with his fascist past during the years of new regime, is depicted with a neorealist approach. "This was the first film of the neorealist period to provoke a discussion in the Italian parliament about movies dealing with inappropriate themes, compromising 'the smooth transition from fascism to a new society'".

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University of Toronto Press, 2008)

<sup>70</sup> Marga Cottino- Jones, *Women, Desire, and Power in Italian Cinema* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 66

*Vivere in pace* is produced by Lux-Film Company, which is “the largest production company in Italy (the *only* large one at that time), and 25 per cent of company’s output were neorealist films. According to Wagstaff;

...Lux Film, successfully steered a middle course between the two alternatives, dividing its activity more or less equally between film of artistic quality, which it vigorously promoted both at home and abroad, and popular genre-vehicles and the occasional ‘spectacular’ for the domestic market.<sup>71</sup>

Zampa worked with notable persons for the scenario and music in *Vivere in pace*, Suso Cecchi D’amico, Aldo Fabrizi and Piero Tellini in scenario and adaptation, and probably the most famous Italian composer of the time, Nino Rota for the soundtrack of the film. Besides Zampa, Rota wrote film scores for many neorealist directors, including Federico Fellini, Luchino Visconti, and Alberto Lattuada. In 1974, he has received Academy Award for Best Original Score for Francis Ford Coppola’s *The Godfather Part II*.

*Vivere in pace*, which was shown worldwide, and was awarded the New York film critics prize for the best foreign language film in 1947. The simple story of the picture is one of people living in a calm remote village in the Italian mountains, and the influence of war on those villagers. The narrator tells the audience in the opening scene that the story is not invented; the village and the characters are real. He introduces the village and its inhabitants, and adds that even though the war is still going on at present, the village is so remote that the people are not interested in it.

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<sup>71</sup> Christopher, Wagstaff, *Italian Neorealist Cinema: An Aesthetic Approach* (Toronto; University of Toronto Press, 2008)

However, consequently the war effects even this remote village, and destroy these villagers' desire to "live in peace".

The story of *Vivere in pace* is about an Italian family that lives in a mountain village and two escaped American prisoners during the last days of World War II. The female protagonist Silvia and her little brother Citto are orphans, who live in their uncle's house. Uncle Tigna, his wife Corinna, and their fathers are simple villagers. One day when Silvia and Citto are punished and sent to the woods to find a missing piglet, they come across the Americans; a young journalist Ronald, and a black GI named Joe. Silvia and Citto help them, as Joe is severely wounded and they need to hide. In a stormy day Silvia brings them to her Uncle's farm in secret. But soon, the family members find the fugitives. They decide to let them stay until Joe gets better. After a while, a German soldier Hans comes to the farm unexpectedly, Uncle Tigna hides the American in the basement. Hans becomes drunk, while at the same time Joe drinks too much as well. Joe breaks the door; enters the kitchen and Hans sees the Americans. As they both are considerably drunk, they think the war is over. As enemies, they walk into the streets, screaming that the war has ended. The next morning, when Hans sobers up and remembers everything, he learns that the Germans are withdrawing. He runs to Uncle Tigna's farm to ask for some civilian clothes so that he can run away. But the Germans arrive at the village; they shoot both Tigna and Hans. After Tigna's funeral Ronald and Joe leave the village.

The chain of unfortunate events begins with the visit of the only German soldier in the village, named Hans, to the farm of "Uncle Tigna". Although the film

claims that the story is not invented and the characters are real, Tigna is played by famous actor Aldo Fabrizi. Fabrizi is known by his role in Roberto Rossellini's *Rome, Open City* (1945) as a priest. Here, in *Vivere in pace*, Tigna lives with his wife, his father and two orphan relatives in a simple village farm. One day Hans comes to their house while the whole family is working in the garden. The dog starts barking, and the older orphan, Silvia, ties the dog to the barn's door. The dog drags and opens the door, so all the animals run away. The family manages to catch most of them, except one piglet. Tigna's wife gets furious and blames the kids. Then Tigna sends them to the woods, and instructs them to either they return with the piglet or not. This scene leads Silvia and her little brother to the two escaped American prisoners of war; a young journalist Ronald and a black GI named Joe. This is actually the scene that changes everything for the people in Tigna's life, and later for the entire villagers.

As Ronald and Joe are escaped prisoners, they have no choice but to hide in the woods. Moreover, Joe is severely wounded and they have barely anything to eat. It turns out that they have found and already cooked the piglet. When Silvia meets Ronald and Joe, she feels sorry for them; let them to have the piglet, although she knows that Tigna's wife will be furious about her decision. Then, in the following scene, we learn that if anyone helps or even talks with the escaped prisoners, their houses and also their neighbors' houses will be burnt down. However, even this death penalty cannot prevent kind hearted Tigna and his family helping Ronald and Joe. First, Silvia and her little brother begin to take food, milk, clothes, and even Uncle Tigna's tobacco without telling the family and give them to the Americans. The people in the house find this situation about -stuff suddenly disappearing- quite

mysterious and think that the explanation for those missing objects could only be a ghost. One evening, when a storm is about to come up, the orphans bring Ronald and Joe secretly to the farm's barn. At night, the householders hear voices coming from the barn and are very frightened, since they believe there is a ghost in there. The next morning Tigna's wife, Corinna asks the priest to bless the barn with the holy water to get rid of the ghost. Eventually, they all find out the truth. It is undoubtedly not a ghost, but the Americans. The priest persuades Uncle Tigna to call the doctor to treat wounded Joe. So they decide that Ronald and Joe can stay with the family until Joe gets better. This part of the film shows us Silvia's brave decision. At the beginning of the film she is depicted mostly like a child, but after Ronald enters her life, she begins to change. The process of how she becomes a young woman is gradually shown; both physically, and spiritually. From this point of view, Zampa presents us Silvia's coming-of-age within a love story during war times. Towards the end, the loss of her Uncle Tigna and Ronald's leaving makes her an adult.

In the following scenes, we see how the relationship develops between Tigna's family and the two Americans. One night while they are eating dinner together, the German soldier makes an unexpected visit to the farmhouse. Ronald and Joe hide in the basement. The reason for his visit is that Hans was a farmer like Tigna before the war and he is homesick. He just wants to spend some time with the family because the atmosphere in Tigna's farm reminds him of his own life and family back in Germany. Hans starts drinking in the kitchen, while at the same time Joe drinks in the basement. After a while they both get quite drunk. The breaking point of the film is when Joe smashes the door and enters the kitchen, and consequently the German sees Joe. Everyone freezes for a minute, as this is the most terrible thing that can



have happened to the family. They all know the consequences of this situation. The reverse shots between Joe and Hans looking at each other increase the tension. Then Hans starts laughing as he thinks the war has ended. Then both soldiers leave the house and start walking in the streets arm in arm, singing and shouting that the war is over.



Fig. 3 – The enemies celebrating the end of the war

They wake the entire village up. The drunken German opens the doors of the storage, at the same time he is screaming “Everything belongs to everybody”. Next morning when Hans sobers up, he tries to remember about the previous night. The whole village packs up their stuff and takes to the hills to wait for the German soldier’s reaction. Only the priest stays in the village to give a signal to them whether to stay in the hills or return depending on Hans’ response. At first, he remembers not much

about the previous night, and the priest tries to convince him that when someone drinks a lot, he or she may see hallucinations. Then the priest rings the bells, which is the sign to the villagers to come back. At the same time Hans receives the news from his Commandant that the Allied Americans have arrived, and the Germans are withdrawing. Hans runs to Uncle Tigna's house. Tigna thinks that he has come to kill him. But in fact Hans goes there to ask for civilian clothes so that he could run away. Tigna agrees to give Hans clothes. However, some other German soldiers have already arrived and realize that Hans is trying to escape. So they shoot both Tigna and Hans. Mortally wounded Tigna dies in his bed, while surrounded by his family, Ronald and Joe. The narrative voice-over closes the film by underlining that the events depicted actually occurred and the story is not invented, as he also done in the opening scene.

*Vivere in pace* depicts a story about common people in urban Italy during the German occupation in the last days of World War II. It has a great success at the box-office, and unlike most neorealist films Zampa treated the themes of war and Partisan struggle in a comedy-drama. He combines the neorealist approach with his own style resulting in a farcical comedy. As the title "To live in peace" suggests, the message of the film is the brotherhood of man as André Bazin found this to be the most important characteristic of all neorealist films. The simple wish of a common man to stop senseless killings— if a man helps Allied soldiers, he and all of his neighbors will be killed—leads to a tragic death. In addition to the truth of the actors and the on-location shooting, the humanistic view of the film is undoubtedly the most important characteristics of Zampa's film. The deployment of war and Resistance are actually common themes of the most neorealist directors. In addition, comedic aspects come

to the fore in many films of the period, such as De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* (*Ladri di biciclette*, 1948), or Rossellini's *Rome Open City* (*Roma città aperta*, 1945). In the fascist period of the 1930s, comedy was the prominent genre, as exemplified by 'white telephone' films, and was criticized as being escapist or unreal because contemporary social problems were not dealt with. In neorealist movement comedy as a genre was not generally accepted. Yet, comic works such as Rossellini's *The Machine to Kill Bad People* (1948) and De Sica's *Miracle in Milan* (1950) are such examples, which break the rules in many ways. They deviate from a purely realist aesthetic precisely in order to illuminate issues crucial to any treatment of realism in the cinema.<sup>72</sup> In doing so, each director provides the viewer with a clearer idea of the boundaries of neorealist aesthetics.<sup>73</sup> These two films by De Sica and Rossellini have been excluded from the sampling of this study as both these directors are accepted as the paramount of neorealism. Moreover, despite the stylistic contradictions, both films are acknowledged as neorealist because their thematic content is typically related to social injustice and economic despair of postwar Italy.

For the analysis of comic structures and how the comic climate is constructed in Zampa's *Vivere in pace*, I find it useful to apply comic plot categorizations and comic thought as defined by Gerald Mast in his comprehensive book *The Comic Mind: Comedy and the Movies*. Regarding Mast's eight comic plots categorization, in which film comedies have been organized by their human material, "the central

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<sup>72</sup> Peter Bondanella, *Italian Cinema: From Neorealism to the Present*, third, revised edition (New York: The Continuum International Publishing, 2001) 90

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*91

character either chooses to perform or is forced to accept a difficult task, often risking his life in the process”.<sup>74</sup> Here, in *Vivere in pace*, the protagonist Uncle Tigna chooses to risk his life and the lives of his family in order to help the escaped American prisoners. He certainly knows the possible fatal consequences, but prefers to let them to stay in his house, as he believes in human brotherhood. Although he is supposed to report Allied runaways to the officials, he makes his own judgment about war, and keeps them in secret anyway. The film provides serious reflection about war and humanity through the medium of comedy. The subject matter of the film’s story might not be comic at all, but by the comic climate of the film through characters, dialogues or gags we recognize that we are in the presence of a comic work.

In relation to the values of time and society, “the comedy maintains that the antisocial behavior of the comic character is superior to society’s norms”.<sup>75</sup> Uncle Tigna stands against the duty of being a good citizen, whose nation is at war, and decides to help the escaped Allied prisoners. In contrast to society’s norms, he does what he believes is the morally right thing to do. Therefore, we might say *Vivere in pace* is iconoclastic in terms of upholding the antisocial behaviors of Tigna and exposing the falsity of society’s norms. According to Mast;

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<sup>74</sup> Gerald Mast, *The comic mind; comedy and the movies* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973) 8

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. 20

[...] the most effective film comedies—as well as the most thought-provoking ones—are mimetic rather than didactic, descriptive rather than prescriptive. They present a picture of a particular social or human condition without tacking on a simplistic moral solution to the comic problems, and without telling the viewer to apply the solution to his own life.<sup>76</sup>

Zampa portrays the serious themes of the period -war, senseless killings and hatred- but he presents those themes through the means of comedy itself. The most striking example of the deployment of humor in serious matters of the film is undoubtedly the scene in which the enemies walk arm in arm, singing songs and cursing the war, as a result of drinking too much wine. When the German soldier comes to Tigna's farmhouse, the family is about to have dinner together with the runaway Americans. Tigna quickly hides Ronald and Joe in the basement, and the entire family tries to entertain the German to distract him. The tension increases as the director cuts between the scenes of Joe getting drunk in the basement and the German doing the same in the kitchen. Finally, Joe breaks through the door, entering the kitchen. The two enemies look at each other with a surprise, while the family looks on with horrified eyes. Here, Zampa completely surprises the viewer, when the drunken soldiers misunderstood that the war is over and hug one another cheerfully. Especially with this particular scene, in addition to the comic gags, the audience realizes that Zampa handles the serious wartime theme in a uniquely comic way. Perhaps, the great success of the film at the box-office is because the viewer can probably identify with the humanistic view of the film. The film's title clearly

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<sup>76</sup> Gerald Mast, *The comic mind; comedy and the movies* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill , 1973) 23

indicates a common wish of everyone at the time. The war has ended only recently, so an anti-war film, suggesting the human brotherhood, was naturally preferable for the audience of the time. “In *To Live in Peace*, Zampa shows that, although they are on two opposing sides, an Italian citizen and a German soldier (a citizen in uniform) can become friends and share common concerns”.<sup>77</sup>

In addition to its humanistic message, the film seeks to convey Christian values, which we can consider as a reflection of reality as Christianity was one of the most important elements of the Italian culture. The emphasis on the importance of the Priest and Christian rituals are apparent throughout the movie. In fact, at first Tigna refuses to help Ronald and Joe, but the Priest insists that he should not let a Christian die like that since Joe’s wounds are quite serious. Unless Tigna helps him, Joe will probably die. Later on, the villagers take advantage of the chance when drunken Hans opened the Nazi supply depot, and take back all that they had been forced to contribute to the depot. Then they fled to the hills to await Hans’ sober response. Only the Priest stays in the village to ask Hans for his forgiveness. In the final episode when Tigna has been shot by the Germans and is about to die, Joe thanks him for saving his life and Tigna says “Any Christian would do it”. The religious aspect of the film is thus combined with the social message, human brotherhood.

The language barrier creates many humorous moments throughout the picture. In addition to Ronald and Joe, Hans barely speaks Italian. When Joe’s wounds are healed, he climbs onto the roof. Tigna sees him and worries about else

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<sup>77</sup> Gian Piero Brunetta, “Italian cinema and the hard road towards democracy, 1945” in *Historical Journal Of Film, Radio & Television*. no. 3 (August 1995): 343

seen Joe because he knows the punishment that will result. Tigna shouts at Joe to come down. But Joe understands nothing. So Tigna asks Ronald's help to translate it to Joe, but he cannot understand either. Tigna becomes desperate and throws a rock at Joe. Here, the comic element comes mainly from the risk of Joe being seen and Tigna's inability to communicate. Tigna's desperate attempts to explain the situation makes the audience laugh, although the serious danger of the circumstances is clearly apparent. The overall impression is that this scene elicits comic reaction because of Tigna's desperation. From the perspective of superiority theory "The realization of one's own superiority can be sparked by the presentation of the failings of others; when others are seen to be grossly incapable, one's own self-image is enhanced by comparison. For this reason we become joyous and are moved to laugh at the infirmities and absurdities of others".<sup>78</sup> In this context, we feel superior by seeing Tigna's inability to express himself and solve his problem. In other examples of language barriers in the film, the viewer is amused by the imperfection of Ronald, Joe and Hans to make themselves understood.

In addition to the physical humor, the use of deliberate absurdity, the affection between young Silvia and the American journalist, Ronald, ease tension in the story. Far away from the war and battleground, where 'enemy' is only a word for these remote villagers, these two young people meet. Silvia is a good-hearted, innocent girl, whereas Ronald is a dreamer, who wants to write true stories rather than newspaper articles. The romantic tension between them, sometimes even naïve, makes the audience to forget about the war.

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<sup>78</sup> Adrian Bardon, "The Philosophy of Humor" in *Comedy: A Geographic and Historical Guide* edited by Maurice Charney (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2005) 464

In the final episode of the film, Tigna is in bed, surrounded by his family, Ronald, Franco and the Doctor. While his wife is crying, Tigna tells her not to and to think about how many poor sons die far from their homes. He feels lucky about having his family and all the people he loves around him while he is dying. Then Joe enters the room with lots of tobacco in his hands. He has brought them for Tigna as a gift for his gratitude. Tigna dies in his bed; the camera shows one by one by in close-ups of everyone crying. This tragic death of Tigna emphasizes that despite Tigna's only wish "to live in peace", the war takes his life even in that remote mountain village. In the following scene, when everyone returns from Tigna's funeral, Silvia asks Ronald when he will return. Ronald implies that he will not. Later on, when Ronald and Joe are leaving, the camera shows Tigna's grave. They say goodbye to him. The film ends with the images of children and the narrator informs us a few years have passed. Now Ronald works for a New York newspaper in China, and Franco and Silvia will marry. And life in the village flows once more as it used to. The war is over and finally people live in peace. The children in the final scene clearly underscore hope for the future. The film's melodramatic ending is in contrast with the comic mode of the film. But we may see Tigna's death as way of Zampa's condemning the war and alluding to people who die because of war. The following dialogue between Tigna and Ronald, while the entire villagers are waiting in the hills for Hans' reaction, highlights the humanistic message of the film:



Tigna: Damned war! You can't be relaxed even on the mountains. You work all your life without harming anyone and then at some point you have to run away like brigands.

Ronald: It's my fault.

Tigna: No. It's men's fault, who don't love each other.

Like many other neorealist films, *Vivere in pace* reflects primarily a humanistic message, exploring ordinary people's lives. Its emphasis upon the conditions of rural Italy at the times of war, places it clearly within the neorealist movement. Distinctively, the serious subject matter of the film is narrated in a comic climate. However, the death of Tigna at the end separates this from the conventional happy-endings of comedy films. Yet, the highlighting of peaceful life in the epilogue offers a sense of hope to the nation.

### 3.2 Innocent Silvia and Her Love for the Enemy

The female protagonist of *Vivere in pace*, Silvia is a young orphan, who lives with her little brother in her relative's house, and is played by sixteen year-old Mirella Monti. Before working with Zampa, Monti has a minor role in Renato Castellani's *Mio Figlio Professore*. However, her acting career did not last long. After her leading role in *Vivere in pace*, she has only two other minor roles in the following years.

Silvia has a key role in the story of *Vivere in pace*. She finds the fugitive Americans in the woods. Although it is even dangerous to talk with them, Silvia decides to help them. Later in the following scenes, we see her affection toward the good-looking journalist Ronald. The film depicts a young female character, who is rather silent most of the time. But she is brave enough to help escaped Allied prisoners, as she is aware of their challenging situation to survive. Though she is portrayed as being kind and calm, when Uncle Tigna's wife, Corinna accuses Silvia and her brother about being lazy or reckless, she defends herself and tries to explain the situation. In these scenes, Corinna explicitly shows hostility to Silvia and Citto. The audience understands that she does not want the orphans to stay with them and tells Tigna that they have other relatives who can take them in their houses. As the story unfolds, we learn the reason for Corinna's hostility to the young Silvia. Silvia's mother had a relationship with a man like Ronald, who had travelled the world, and was very different than the simple farmers. After a while he left Silvia's mother, and she subsequently committed suicide. Corinna thinks that Silvia is disobedient and irresponsible like her mother.

Silvia is an adolescent, who is in the process of forming her gender. She is experiencing love for the first time. After she meets Ronald, she begins to take care of her physical appearance. She wears nice dresses, does her hair up nice to earn Ronald's appreciation. At the same time, Silvia realizes another man's affection to her. Franco is a young man from her village who has known her since her childhood. He is a deserter like Ronald as well. But he must hide because he is a draft-dodger. For Silvia, Franco is only an idler, whereas Ronald is an educated gentleman. Between these two men's love, she steps into the construction of her femininity. She

is depicted as more resistant than the traditional portrayal of passive and submissive women. She helps an enemy. She steals bread for him, hides him and tries to find a way to keep him safe. Even though the film ostensibly tells the men's story, she is the actual catalyst in the film action.

The relationship between Silvia and Ronald is implicit. They never talk about their love directly. But from the time they have met, the viewer realizes their affection for each other. One day, Ronald tells Silvia that he wants to write a true story about the people like Tigna's house, a girl like Silvia and war. Silvia responds "She would like a happy-end to that story". After that scene, whenever the youngsters want to talk about their feelings, they tell it as it is from a part of Ronald's story. The most intimate scene, when Silvia enters his room to call for him to the dinner, she finds papers on the ground, asks Ronald how the story is going. Ronald tells her that he has reached a difficult point as the man in the story (implying himself and his thoughts) realizes that he loves the people, whom help him. The last thing he wants is that something bad may happen to them because of him. And he adds that his character of the story has changed a lot along the way and he does not know what to do. The reverse shots in medium close-up during these sequences emphasize the distance between them at the beginning. Then when they get closer, we see them together in a medium shot; Ronald holds Silvia's hand, and he approaches to kiss her. Here, the editing suggests their concerns at first, and then gradually uniting. But, when they are about to kiss, Tigna's wife yells at Silvia that the dinner is ready. Although this is the only scene where we see the affection between Silvia and Ronald being interrupted, and we never see again any more

intimate scenes for the remainder of the film, Zampa still subtly show the love of these young people.

The comicality of Silvia's character is in fact related substantially with her love to Ronald. The first night she meets Ronald, she is punished because of him, as she has given the piglet away to them. Although Silvia and her little brother Citto are sent to their room without having dinner, Uncle Tigna could not stop bringing food to them in secret. When he enters the room, they pretend to sleep; Tigna says '*Basta con questa commedia!*' Then Silvia tries to deceive Tigna to get some medicine to bring it to the wounded Joe. She tells Uncle Tigna that she has gotten a splinter in her finger so that she needs medicine. At first, Tigna suggests her to suck it then it will be healed. Next, Silvia tries another trick. This time she uses, Citto and tell Tigna that she needs medicine for him because he has an infection on his knee. But again this attempt fails. Tigna bring medicine for both Silvia and her brother and force them to swallow immediately. What makes Silvia comical in these scenes is that her naïve attempts to trick Tigna. As the film progresses, we see Silvia secretly stealing food, milk and clothes to take to Ronald. These actions may not be considered comic at all, but a joyful soundtrack and the continuity of the story help to create a comic climate. As things begin to disappear, it leads the story to the humorous ghost episode of the film.

Silvia's main role in the narrative of the film is to bring the Americans and the villagers together. She is the reason in the first place that Ronald and Joe come and stay in Tigna's house. Her mercy to the wounded, hungry Americans triggers the narration. Although she knows the threats of her action, she chooses to help them

anyway. Her affection to Ronald may be the first reason, but she cares about Joe and eventually saves his life. Although, Silvia is presented as more resisting than the traditional portrayal of a passive female, she is not shown as a heroic figure. Moreover, her only concern is to be loved by Ronald. Silvia is depicted as a beautiful young woman, here; she is presented as the object of the male's gaze and desire. Despite the unhappy ending to Ronald and Silvia's love story, the film offers a traditional solution for the female protagonist, a marriage with Franco. She is constructed at first as a resisting female character, at the end of the film, she says nothing to Ronald when he leaves her, then marries Franco.

The other female character of the film is Tigna's wife Corinna, played by Ave Ninchi, is a middle-aged woman. Her character is depicted as a complaining woman who about just about everything. She constantly accuses Silvia and little Citto as being lazy, disrespectful and troublesome. Corinna is presented as exclusively engaged in her traditional housewife activities. In almost every scene, she cleans the house, milks the cow, or cooks. She completely fits into the traditional female role "Woman as Mother" of the patriarchal discourse. Whenever Corinna has an argument with Silvia or Citto, Uncle Tigna tries to calm her down. Her hostility towards Silvia for falling in love with a stranger and for resisting authority shows Corinna's obedience to the traditional female role as passive and submissive.

Corinna's contribution to the comic mode of the film is her fuss and complaining throughout the picture. Especially in the scene where she believes there is a ghost in the house, her gestures are brilliantly amusing. She calls the Priest for help. When the Priest goes into the barn to bless it, suddenly the door closes. She is

terrified, knocks on the door, but gets no answer. Then Tigna and the Grandfather go in. The same scene is repeating. She screams as she tries to understand what is happening in the barn. Finally they all step out and carry wounded Joe to the house. Joe's head is covered with a piece of cloth. Corinna tries to understand this unusual situation, at the same time, she is shaking from fear. Her exaggerated movements create the comic atmosphere of the scene. In another scene, in which Hans visits their farm, while they are having dinner with Ronald and Joe, Tigna hides Joe into the basement and the whole family tries to entertain Hans so that he cannot realize Joe's presence. Here, Corinna drinks and dances with Hans. She looks exhausted and scattered, but continues to dance nonetheless. Her acting skills become distinguishable in this particular scene. The whole family acts in a similar mood, but she is the one who can make us laugh.

## CHAPTER IV

### 4.1 Comedy and Class Conflict: Luciana Emmer's *Una domenica d'agosto* (1950)

Luciano Emmer is a director who is primarily known by his documentaries. As a passionate art lover, Emmer, in collaboration with Enrico Gras, produced many art-documentary films during the 1940s and 1950s. Their unique style has brought Emmer and Gras to the fore in producing film about art in Italy. Richard Meran Barsam defines their style in showing detailed readings of individual pictures as:

...developed a film style that focused on the narrative content of paintings: *Earthly Paradise (Paradiso terrestre*, 1941), presented Hieronymus Bosch's great painting through detailed photographs; *The Drama of the Son of Man (Racconto di un affresco*, 1941), a similar evocation of Giotto's murals in the Arena Chapel in Padua; and *The Wars* (1941), which presented a composite of war paintings by Piero della Francesca, Simone Martini, and Paolo Uccello.<sup>79</sup>

Emmer has started directing fictional movies with *Una domenica d'agosto* in 1950, which is followed by *Parigi é sempre Parigi (Paris is always Paris*, 1951), *Le*

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<sup>79</sup> Richard Meran Barsam, *Nonfiction Film: A Critical History* (Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1992) 114

*ragazze di Piazza di Spagna* (*Three girls from Rome*, 1952). Later, in 1960 he has directed *La ragazza in vetrina* (*Girl in the Window*), which was so heavily cut by censors that as a result Emmer has decided to abandon his career as a director.

The story of *Una domenica d'agosto* begins in Rome, Enrico and his friends jump on their bicycles, Marcella and her family gets in their friend's old car, Alberto and Ines takes the train, Luciana and Roberto leave with his car; they all set off for the beach in Ostia. At the beach Luciana and Roberto check into an expensive hotel, Marcella's family, and Alberto and Ines take a cabinet at the beach, while Franco and his friends sit at the beach where there are no facilities. Roberto's friends Baron and Nora come to the hotel. Franco and Marcella meet at the hotel's beach, where both of them secretly enter. The other young couple Ercole and Rosetta comes to Ostia to ask for help from a friend. At the end of the day all of them return to Rome one by one.

*Una Domenica D'agosto* depicts groups of people from different social classes, ranging from lower-middle class, urban poor to the upper class, all residents of Rome. Their trip to Ostia to spend a Sunday at the seaside is shown in random sequence; and occasionally their paths crossed. One by one, the audience gets acquainted with the characters. On a sunny Sunday some of them cycle, some drive, others take the train to get to the beach. The script consists of several episodes, all of them introducing different characters. The interwoven stories of the characters are shown piece by piece. The narration cuts casually from one group of characters to another; however in each part, Emmer use long takes and deep focus, therefore



allowing us to see the background stories as well. The film articulates the poor/wealthy dichotomy through several sub stories.

In the opening sequence, a group of young men are waiting for their friend, Enrico, who is played by young Franco Interlenghi. The boys seem to belong to the middle class at a point, which is intentionally emphasized by the director. The importance of showing their milieu is that later in the film, Enrico represents himself as a wealthy young boy in order to be befriended by Marcella and Iolanda. By the time Enrico arrives, the young men jump on their bicycles, and set off to Ostia. Then we see Marcella and her family trying to fit in a hurried way into their friend's old car, and after a while they depart. Emmer then shows the crowds in front of the train station. Although the director states that his intention is not to shoot a "documentary on a summer Sunday in Rome", his style in the train station sequence, seems more about capturing the common man's challenge to buy a ticket and find a seat on the train.<sup>80</sup> In between the crowds, Alberto manages to buy tickets for himself, his daughter Cristina and his fiancée Ines. They take the train together to Ostia. Here, in these scenes, Ines complains about almost everything and shows her displeasure over traveling by public transportation rather than a private car. In addition to that, she treats her fiancée's little daughter rather apathetically.

In the following scene, Luciana and Renato argue in the stairs, while Roberto is waiting for her in his expensive car, outside her apartment in the slums of Rome. We understand that Luciano has ended her relationship with Renato a while ago. The dialogue between Luciana and Renato shows that Luciana sees Roberto as an

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<sup>80</sup> Roy Armes, *Patterns of Realism* (South Brunswick, A.S. Barnes ,1971) 176

opportunity to break away from her social class, to have a better life. Luciana tells him: “As I was born here, should I die here? Leave me alone, please!” and continues: “Go away, clown. I despise you, I despise you all. I’m sick and tired all this filth, all this misery! So you look for a job and marry me, what a big deal. What a future! I’d rather jump out of the window.” Luciana’s reaction to Renato seems more social rather than personal. She chooses to be with Roberto, as he is represented as a key to the step up from the hardships of lower-class life. At the same time, Renato is unemployed, has nothing to give Luciana except his love. But clearly Luciana wants more than that. The relationship between Luciana, Renato, and Roberto seems at first like a love triangle, however in fact it reflects class distinction.

In the postwar period, poverty and unemployment were the biggest problems in Italy, and appeared as the main theme of many neorealist pictures. However, social realism was not the only concern of neorealist directors. “In fact, in many of their films they underlined the relationship of illusion and reality, fiction and fact, so as to emphasize their understanding of the role both played in their art”.<sup>81</sup> Emmer injects poverty and class conflict in his film, but not in a way of documenting the harsh problems of the time. But he projects his tale with his own poetic cinematic language. Later on, Emmer turns back to Alberto and Ines while they are about to leave little Cristina at a Christian summer school. Ines is in a hurry to get rid of Alberto’s child and check into a luxury hotel. As in the previous scene of the episode with Alberto and Ines, here again Ines shows no sympathy for the little Cristina. No

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<sup>81</sup> Peter Bondanella, *Italian Cinema: From Neorealism to the Present*, third, revised edition (New York: The Continuum International Publishing, 2001)

matter how Ines pressures him to stay in the expensive hotel, Alberto decides to stay in the bungalows near Cristina's school. We realize that leaving Cristina to this summer school is Ines' demand, as Alberto seems sad about being away from his child. When Alberto and Ines arrive at the bungalow, they find out that it has been sold to another woman. The woman also has a child in the same school with Cristina. Alberto befriends with her. They talk about raising a child on their own. She is clearly depicted as opposite to Ines; kind and lovely. This comparison between these two women underlines Ines' selfishness. After that Emmer cuts back to Marcella and her family. The young girl goes dancing with her friend Iolanda. But she gets bored there, and suggests to Iolanda that they sneak into the hotel's beach. The girls hope to meet rich, aristocratic boys there. However, instead they meet Franco, who pretends to be rich just like Marcella and Iolanda do. When the girls see the grease on Franco's hands, Franco keeps on acting like an upper-class boy and tells them that it is from his car. Like Luciana, Marcella is in search of a wealthy life, and she thinks that marrying a rich boy is her only chance for this. Franco's misrepresentation of himself is most likely because he thinks if the girls find out that he actually is poor, they will not want to be with him. At the same time Baron Arnaldo and his lover Nora, arrive to the hotel. The hotel manager welcomes him, and informs him that Roberto has already arrived and booked a cabin at the beach for him. Nora seems to dislike Roberto, as she believes he takes advantage of the Baron and actually is after the Baron's money. She criticizes the Baron for being friends with Roberto. Baron tells her that they live in democracy; "blood aristocracy is worth as much as a good profession". In the following scene, the Baron comes across a friend. When the Baron tells him that he has just returned from a business trip from Cannes, his friend

finds it crazy. Clearly, he finds it unnecessary, as he is a Baron. But the Baron replies: “It is modern times, man must adjust...” As this dialogue between the Baron and his friend suggests, the existing class consciousness is changing after the war. The Baron’s friend represents the blood aristocrat’s view about working, and the Baron emphasizes his views about equalization of aristocracy and bourgeoisie. With the help of using different groups of characters, the film exploits the shifting situation in Italian society both in economic and cultural terms.

Lastly, Emmer introduces us the final couple of the film, Ercole and Rosetta. We turn back to the empty streets of Rome, and a traffic police in the middle of the road. Ercole, who is played by Marcello Mastroianni, calls his fiancée Rosetta. Rosetta asks Ercole to come to the house, where she works. When Ercole arrives, he learns that Rosetta has lost her job because the owner of the house find out that Rosetta is expecting a baby, out of wedlock. This middle-class couple is the only leading characters who do not misrepresent themselves, or lie in order to find money. Even though they are in a bad situation financially, because Rosetta has lost her job, they try to solve their problem in a decent and honest way.

Afterwards, we turn back to Ostia, and see that Marcella’s family enjoying the sea. Marcella and Iolanda have promised to meet Franco at the beach in the afternoon. Marcella ditches Iolanda, and goes early. She and Franco go canoeing, and leave Iolanda behind. While the young couple is getting closer, suddenly the canoe sinks. They have to swim to the shore, but they realize that they are far away from the hotel. In the following scene, while Luciana is changing her clothes, the Baron enters the cabinet. Luciana slaps the Baron, and goes to Roberto to relate this

incident. Roberto insists that Luciana apologize to the Baron, and confess that he is not a rich man and that he needs the Baron's help to earn some money. Luciana gets mad, and leaves the hotel. At the same time, Luciana's ex-lover Renato breaks into a slaughterhouse, where he used to work, with a couple of men. But they get caught, while escaping. Apparently, Renato tries to find money to get Luciana back. Throughout the films, we see many different ways of getting rich: young women try to find wealthy husbands, young men try to befriend aristocrats, or breaking into a workplace. Emmer's way of showing these incidents in humorous stories distinguishes him from other directors of his time. Maybe he proposes no solution to those problems; however he influences the audience to at least think about them. He strives to cross class lines, in order to underline the current point of view for each of them.

Then we see Ercole and Rosetta again. They decide to visit an old acquaintance of Rosetta for help, who is staying in a nursing home in Ostia. Their attempt proves unsuccessful, they return back to Rome. In this scene, the contrast of Ercole and Rosetta with other characters is depicted clearly. Even though they are in despair of money, when the old woman offers them to lend them some, they refuse to take it. They only want her help to find a job for Rosetta. After this unsuccessful attempt to find money, Ercole tells Rosetta that they cannot return to his home village to marry and live, as there is no job. With Renato's story, the director presents to us the economic hardship of the lower-class in urban areas, and with Ercole he gives a hint that the situation is even worse in rural Italy.

Afterwards, Alberto and Ines break up because Alberto changes his mind about leaving little Cristina to the summer school. Ines gets mad and tells Alberto to choose either her or the child. Alberto takes his child and leaves. Ines accepts to return back to Rome with the man she has met at the beach. In the following scene, we are in Rome again. Rosetta arrives at the house where she works, as she has one more week before termination. She sees fire-fighters in front of the house. It turns out that Rosetta has forgotten to unplug the iron, and fire has broken out. Later, we see Luciana is back in Rome as well. When she arrives at her apartment, she sees Renato has been caught by the police. The story of Renato and his friends' breaking into a work place is particularly indicative of the post- World War II socioeconomic situation. It shows a glimpse of how proletarians are affected by economic hardship and unemployment in an urban environment.

In the final scene, Marcella too has returned to the city. While she is walking to her house, someone pours water from a window, which accidentally wets her father. It appears that this someone is Franco. He sees Marcella and follows her. Finally, they both learn the truth about each other. Franco is a plumber's son, and Marcella does not belong to a rich family as she pretends. But they seem not to care about the truth. They kiss, Marcella leaves, while Franco is looking behind her from the window.

The story of *Una Domenica D'agosto* is written by Sergio Amidei, and the script is revised by Emmer, Zavattini, Franco Brusati, and Giulio Macchi. In his book *Patterns of Realism*, Roy Armes describes Emmer's aim as "not to make 'omnibus' film composed of different episodes nor a documentary on a summer Sunday in

Rome but, in his own words, “a dramatic story of that particular day and those people whose lives suddenly became entangled by fate or coincidence, whatever you like to call it”<sup>82</sup> Each group of people that depicted in the story has connected to each other spontaneously, in a sense that the audience almost forgets it is a fictional world. The common theme in most of the story fragments is of characters presenting them as richer than they really are; except Ercole and Rosetta.

Emmer’s choice for casting is “with no less than 102 characters, all played by non-professionals or young unknown actors”.<sup>83</sup> The most notable ones among those was Marcello Mastroianni, who is later internationally acknowledged, made his first film with Emmer as a young traffic policeman, Ercole. Marcella’s lover, Franco is played by nineteen year old Franco Interlenghi, who worked previously with Vittorio De Sica in *Sciuscià* (1946), and Alessandro Blasetti’s *Fabiola* (1949). As quoted in Roy Armes’ *Patterns of Realism*, in order to be “as sincere and unpretentious as possible, Emmer began with a minimal scenario which was later enriched as the work progressed by the inclusion of facts or characters that gradually presented themselves. He relied on his young actors in order to achieve spontaneity and express potentiality”.<sup>84</sup>

In *Una Domenica D’agosto*, the director shows several groups of people from all social classes, for example, an aristocrat, a traffic policeman, a plumber’s son. Their tales become interwoven with each other. In this way we are able to see the

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<sup>82</sup> Roy Armes, *Patterns of Realism* (South Brunswick, A.S. Barnes ,1971) 176

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

everyday practices of each class, and the distinction between them. The film has neither deliberate absurdity nor gags. However, the comicality of the film comes from characters' misrepresentation of themselves and the lies they tell about their lives in order to attract each other. And we laugh at them is because we have already known their true stories and their tricks. Thus we recognize our supremacy over the characters. The question is why we laugh when we know about their tricks. In modern theories of humor, the *superiority* theory is defined as one "by which laughter is brought about by feelings of superiority over another or by elation at another's misfortune"<sup>85</sup>. Adrian Bardon describes English political philosopher Thomas Hobbes' explanation of *superiority* theory as:

The philosopher often regarded as making the strongest statement of the Superiority Theory is the seventeenth century English political philosopher Thomas Hobbes. He observes that those who laugh often are the same as those who are "greedy of applause from everything they do well" (Human Nature). He sees laughter as arising from joy, primarily from the feeling of one's own achievement or the realization of one's own ability. The realization of one's own superiority can be sparked by the presentation of the failings of others; when others are seen to be grossly incapable, one's own self-image is enhanced by comparison. For this reason we become joyous and are moved to laugh at the infirmities and absurdities of others.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Cameron Shelley, Plato on the psychology of humor, *Humor - International Journal of Humor Research* Volume 16, Issue 4, 351–367

<sup>86</sup> Adrian Bardon, "The Philosophy of Humor" in *Comedy: A Geographic and Historical Guide* edited by Maurice Charney (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2005) 464



From this point of view, we find misrepresentations or lies throughout the film humorous because we feel superior to the characters, who believed in the lies and tricks. When Marcella and Iolanda meet with Franco, the girls tell him that they had the biggest ball at the beach last summer. The spectator finds this scene humorous as Franco believes in their lie but we know the truth. And Franco says that the grease on his hands is because of his car. But we have already seen that he has been fixing his bike in the earlier scenes; his dirty hands are because of the bike, not the car.

The *superiority* theory emphasizes the status and the position of the viewer in relation to the characters. Thus, it affects how we engage with the characters. Both Marcella and Franco obviously lie about themselves as they are ashamed of admitting that they are actually poor. Also they fear their fake identities being exposed of, as they think the other one may lose interest if she or he finds out the truth about themselves. We recognize their good intentions and vulnerability, so they earn our sympathy. However, as a result of our superior perspective, we do not feel their embarrassments. Our amusement in response to these characters comes from their insecurity and immaturity. In another example, when Luciana argues with Renato, and leaves with Robert, we learn from Nora that Robert is not as wealthy as he pretends. Thus, we take pity on Luciana, but at the same time we find this situation amusing, as we know what Luciana does not know. Our position in relation to Luciana makes us superior in terms of her naivety.

Apart from the superiority that we feel in the representation of character failings, Emmer builds a comic climate by which we recognize that we are in the

presence of a comic world. Gerald Mast offers the concept of “worthlessness” as a way to understand the comic climate of the film.

A worthless action is that we do not take seriously, that we consider trivial and unimportant rather than a matter of extreme importance, of life and death. Now, if comedy does indeed depict matters of life and death, then the reason such depiction remains comic is because it *has not been handled as if it were* a matter of life and death.<sup>87</sup>

In *Una Domenica D'agosto*, the subject matter is not life and death, but the class conflict, that is, each class' perception of the current situation of the society after the war. However, they are represented in a way that it seems unimportant. For example, when the Baron is having dinner with his friends, and also Luciana is there as well, loads of leaflets are thrown from an aircraft. Upon this the Baron says that propaganda surely is the strongest weapon. One of his friends asks him who used to say that. Then they both immediately say “Well...better forget it”, and hurriedly change the subject. Emmer touches serious themes so subtly, so that the viewer does not directly recognize their seriousness. Thus these depictions remain comic rather than didactic. Actually, the slogan of the Cinecitta, inaugurated by Mussolini, was “Cinema is the strongest weapon”. For Mussolini cinema was the most important tool for propaganda. Emmer surely implies Mussolini's slogan in this scene, however he does it within the realm of comedy. Fascism is subtly condemned as being a subject not worth talking about.

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<sup>87</sup> Gerald Mast, *The comic mind; comedy and the movies* (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill , 1973) 9

In his article “The Roots of Neorealism”, Pasquale Iannone gives valuable observations about the writings on neorealism (not only those in English). They have tended to focus mostly and exclusively on Rosellini, De Sica, and Visconti. Moreover, he points out an important aspect of how in aesthetic terms neorealism was not a total break with the past. However, in his comparison between *Menschen am Sonntag* by Robert Siodmak and Edgar G. Ulmer (1929) and *Una domenica d’agosto*, he claims that Siodmak and Ulmer’s film “exudes a greater sense of human warmth than works such as Walther Ruttmann’s *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (1927) or Alberto Cavalcanti’s *Nothing But Time* (1926), but equally it makes a clear choice not to depict the conflict and hardships of life in the modern metropolis” and Emmer is influenced by this film. Iannone argues that Emmer’s picture disregards neorealism’s political agenda.<sup>88</sup> I disagree with Iannone’s opinion that Emmer’s film lacks political commitment, because the primary tenet of neorealism’s political agenda is to depict not only the bourgeoisie lifestyle but more importantly ordinary people’s lives and their problems. From this point of view Emmer presents various groups of people from different social classes, which highlights the class difference issue. He criticizes the current social and political environment in a comic manner.

#### 4.2 Young and Beautiful Women of *Una domenica d’agosto*

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<sup>88</sup> Pasquale Iannone, “The Roots of Neorealism” in *Sight & Sound* May, 2013: 58

The leading female characters of the film, Marcella, Luciana, and Rosetta are beautiful, young women. Marcella and Luciana share mostly similar attributes, as they both have the same concern, finding a rich husband. These two young women are eager to marry a wealthy man, as if this is their only chance to break away from their social class of poverty and deprivation. Rosetta, on the other hand, seems not to have that kind of concern. However, marriage is also her priority, as she is expecting a baby, though she is not married.

Marcella shows a clear distaste for being at the “poor” side of the beach and suggests to her friend Iolanda that they sneak into the luxury hotel’s beach. She tells her that here they can find wealthy aristocrat boys. Then they meet Franco. Both the girls and Franco misrepresent themselves as coming from a rich family. Franco has similar motivations as the girls, and lies about himself. At first, Franco seems to be interested in Iolanda. But when Marcella tricks Iolanda and goes to meet Franco before her, Franco tells her that she is the one who he actually likes.



Fig. 4- Marcella and Iolanda make fun of people at the “poor” side of the beach

Although Luciana seems to get the wealthy man she wants, she later finds out that he is a con artist. In the first sequence we see Luciana, arguing with her ex-lover, Renato. He tells her that he will find a job and marry her. But Luciana rejects him. She is filled with dreams of upper-class comforts, and humiliates and rejects Renato. For Luciana, Robert is the connection she needs to escape her poverty-stricken life. As we understand from the dialogue between her and Nora in the cabinet while Luciana is leaving Robert, she is still in love with Renato. But she chooses money over love to achieve her goal. Luciana especially defies the traditional codification of “Woman as Wife”, as she obviously refuses this role for fear of poverty, also rejects emotional commitment.

Marcella and Luciana are depicted as young and beautiful, thus turning them into objects of the male gaze. They are also portrayed as ambitious in terms of

breaking away from their lower-middle class. Their beauty is emphasized with close-ups of their faces and bodies. Specifically in these scenes, they play the role of woman-as-spectacle. Despite their beauty being visually emphasized, they are not formulated as *femme fatales*. The difference between woman-as-spectacle and *femme fatale* is the seductiveness of the woman. Marcella and Luciana are depicted as young, beautiful, but their relationship with men is more distant. On the other hand *femme fatales*, “because of their obvious show of seductiveness, these female characters transgressed the patriarchal codification of female behavior and often became subject to punishment and suffering in order for the status quo, overturned by their subversive presence and its effects, to be reestablished”.<sup>89</sup> Although Marcella and Luciana do not pay such a price, their hopes of a wealthier life are ruined.

However, the male/female relationships in the film are rather different than in a mere conventional context. It focuses on the female character’s view point and the story is shaped by their decisions. Thus, we may say that the female characters are the catalysts of the narration. They are presented as active and desiring, without evoking any negative characterization as “prostitute”. Comedy as a genre often allows this kind of subversion of the status quo, which generally is not tolerated by more serious genres.

The major difference between Rosetta and the other leading female characters is that she does not have concerns about her current social class. She has an important problem in her life: a premarital pregnancy and the subsequent loss of her job as a maid. She is depicted as a beautiful young woman, but not sexy like Luciana.

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<sup>89</sup> Marga Cottino- Jones, *Women, Desire, and Power in Italian Cinema* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 20

Engaged to handsome, honest traffic policeman, Ercole, the couple tries to find a solution to their problem. Obviously, they need money to get married, and Rosetta's losing her job because of the pregnancy affects their relationship. Her employer fires her because Rosetta has disregarded the moral codes by having a sexual relationship before marriage. In order to find a new job and a place to stay, the couple decides to visit one of Rosetta's acquaintances. This is an old lady, who lives in a nursery home. She offers to lend Rosetta some money, but Ercole refuses to accept it. In contrast to other characters in the film, who lie to one another and misrepresent themselves, this couple is depicted as loving, caring and honest. The viewer has sympathy for Rosetta since she is presented as fragile, crying in the very first scene she appears in. However, her fragility is not formulated in a submissive or passive way. She tries to find a solution to her condition. On the other hand, Rosetta is the only female character who is punished for her actions and gets fired from her job.

The relation between the comicality and the female characters lies in the narration of the film. As the female characters are the motivator of the narration, they ensure the comic climate; in the context of their decisions they lead the comic situations. As I have argued, the main reason the viewer laughs is that we feel superior to the characters' lies and misrepresentation of themselves. For instance, we laugh at Marcella when she tries to behave like a wealthy young girl, as we already know the truth about her. As a result of our superior perspective, we find each of her attempts to look like a rich girl humorous. The director uses neither visual gags nor deliberate physical absurdity to create the comic mode, because the narration of the film provides it. As the female characters' decisions and actions lead the narration,

they trigger the comic situations. Their stories are told in patriarchal discourses; however, they react against it, and make their own decisions.



## CONCLUSION

The objective of this thesis has been to discuss comedy films in the immediate postwar period of neorealism (1945-50), and female characters' roles in the construction of narration. Comedy films have been undervalued by the critics as not serving the "social awareness" aim of the neorealist directors. Comedy films were often claimed to be as distracters. They were accused of a lack of focus on the contemporary problems of Italian society. The choice of this topic was decided with the realization that even in the comic mode, these films dealt with the pressing problems of the time. Comedy, by nature, has the opportunity to touch sensitive subjects without being risky and is able to criticize free from censorship. Through my film analyses I have attempted to demonstrate how the directors handled these sensitive problems: the effects of war, poverty, and unemployment within the changing social context of in post- World War II Italy. These films function as the cinematic portraits of the ordinary people living both in rural and urban regions of Italy.

In his film, Renato Castellani injects local and regional social realities into a comedy. The endemic problem of the post-war period, poverty and unemployment is depicted via a young people in love. Although its plot resembles the Hollywood style romantic comedy, particularly the "boy meets girl; boy loses girl; boy gets girl" theme, Castellani portrays Neapolitan economic hardships. In relation to the theme, the young couple faces various difficulties, which results in Antonio's repeated

termination. Thus the union of Carmela and Antonio must be postponed. However, this simple story is enriched by the organic development of situations, truth of the actors, and on-location shootings. “At the time, leftist critics (and as a result, subsequent critics and historiographers) have wrongly branded this film as the father of ideological dissolution and so-called pink neorealism”.<sup>90</sup> In my analysis of *Due soldi di speranza*, I illustrated that despite its warm-hearted love story, Castellani presents a common, banal piece of everyday life and its problems in the rural South. Besides, the use of dialect strengthens the authenticity of the characters. Dialect was an essential characteristic of neorealism, in order to confront “all the cultural connotations attached to the historical and sociological fact of dialect”.<sup>91</sup> He offers realistic portrayals of ordinary people, whose only concern is to survive in the hard times of post war period. However, the director weaves the political conflict between the Church and the Partisans into the protagonist’s struggle for survival, as he works at the Church by day, and by night he works with the Partisans. But when the Reverend hears about it, Antonio immediately loses his job at the Church.

Luigi Zampa’s film *Vivere in pace* (To Live in Peace) deals with war and its effects on people like many other neorealist pictures. However, he distinctively handles this serious subject in a completely comic manner. Through comedy, he condemns war, senseless killings, and he underscores human brotherhood. Among the three films I have analyzed, Zampa’s film is the only one which employs visual

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<sup>90</sup> Gian Piero Brunetta, *The history of Italian cinema : a guide to Italian film from its origins to the twenty-first century* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 2009)143

<sup>91</sup> Christopher, Wagstaff, *Italian Neorealist Cinema: An Aesthetic Approach* (Toronto; University of Toronto Press, 2008) 319

gags and deliberate physical absurdity to create the comic mood. In doing so, he handles serious subjects as if it were not a matter of life or death. He injects comedy as a political satire. The success of his film is that he uses comedy descriptively rather than prescriptively, and clearly not didactically. Most notably, Zampa shows drunken enemies arm in arm, singing happily, both under the mistaken impression that the war is over. Through this scene, he emphasizes that although they are on opposite sides, they wish the same, “to live in peace”. The subject matter of the film was taken from actual recent historical events and Zampa projects this through the everyday life experiences of rural people.

Among the three films, Luciano Emmer’s *Una domenica d’agosto* is only one, which focuses on the urban setting. The richness of the characters from various social classes, played by young unknown actors and non-professionals, gives a glimpse of each class’ living practices and problems to the spectator. Emmer depicts hardships in the slums of Rome, middle class unemployment, and blood aristocracies’ entering into the business world. Emmer underlines that he has started with a minimal scenario, and relied on his cast in order to achieve spontaneity.<sup>92</sup> He effectively uses film camera, to interweave reality and art with each other. At the same time, he amuses the spectator with comic characters and dialogues. The comic mode of the film is mainly constructed in the misrepresentation of characters about themselves. The reason that we find them humorous is primarily because we feel superior to the characters’ failings and misfortunes. The position of the viewer in relation to the characters is distant, and we begin to have sympathy with their innocent attempts to present themselves as wealthy. But rather than pity them, we

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<sup>92</sup> Roy Armes, *Patterns of Realism* (South Brunswick, A.S. Barnes ,1971) 176

feel superior and laugh at them because we know the truth that they do not know. However, despite the film's comic climate, the director touches upon serious problems of the time. The poor/rich dichotomy handles the class conflict theme, and reveals the clear inequality of Italian society in the post war period. As any other successful comedy film, Emmer presents these harsh social and political issues in such a way that the viewer can notice them when they have a closer look.

In film theories, comedy hardly draws attention from feminist theory. The primary reason for this gap in the studies is probably the long-standing emphasis of feminist film theory's focus on melodrama. Akin to that, there is a considerable gap in the writings of neorealist comedy films focusing on female characters. In the film analyses provided in this thesis, it is revealed that the female characters are essential to the plots of these films. In all three films they are the actual motivator of the narration. Although the images of women vary, the leading female characters show clear resistance to the patriarchal discourse. In comparison with comedy films, in melodramas women are submissive to the patriarchal authority, mostly shown as sacrificing themselves for love. "These women, therefore, by choosing to sacrifice themselves and showing "virtues amid adversity," seem to bypass their patriarchal representation and become endowed with superior, ennobling auras that elevate them as human beings socially and morally committed".<sup>93</sup>

In Renato Castellani's *Due soldi di speranza* (Two Cents' Worth of Hope), Carmela is portrayed as a stubborn, rebellious young woman. Despite many difficulties she experiences, she fights back, and finds her own way to get what she

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<sup>93</sup> Marga Cottino- Jones, *Women, Desire, and Power in Italian Cinema* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 74

wants. By depicting two young women of the same age, Giulia and Carmela, Castellani presents submissive and passive Giulia on one hand and unruly protagonist Carmela on the other hand. As Teresa De Lauretis suggests, the main problem of feminist film theories is that primarily conceived sexual difference in binary opposition between ‘Man’ and ‘Woman’, which produces universalized concept of ‘Woman as Other from Man’. She proposes analyzing the differences among and within women.<sup>94</sup> From this perspective, Carmela as a woman can be seen as a real social being, whereas Giulia represents the image of Woman, who obeys the patriarchal authority and is oppressed by the male dominance.

In Luigi Zampa’s *Vivere in pace* (To Live in Peace), the director shows us female protagonist Silvia’s coming-of-age. Her love for a fugitive American journalist, whom she could be punished by death if she helps him, begins to change young Silvia. Similar to Castellani’s leading female character Carmela, Silvia is brave. Although she resists the traditional portrayal of passive femininity, she is not shown as a heroic figure. Zampa underlines her physical beauty, which makes her an object of the male gaze. Her main role in the narration is as the catalyst that brings the Americans and the villagers together. Her brave decision to help escaped prisoners influences the other villagers to see them as human rather than enemy, which shapes the humanistic message of the film.

In the last film analysis of this thesis, Luciano Emmer’s *Una domenica d’agosto* (Sunday in August) the female characters are depicted as young and beautiful, similar to the other two films. With several close-ups on their bodies to

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<sup>94</sup> Teresa De Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction*, (Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1987) 2

emphasize their physical beauty, like Silvia and Carmela they are also objects of the male gaze. Their physical beauty became a vehicle for the representation of woman-as-spectacle. The main difference from the other films' female characters is that here their motivation is not love, but to break away from their social classes. However, they are presented as active and desiring, without evoking a negative characterization as "prostitute". But it seems fair to state that, female characters in *Una domenica d'agosto* are depicted as the victims of social unfairness. Although the representations of women vary in the analyzed three films, despite the patriarchal legacy of earlier Italian cinema, these women show resistance to the traditional codified female roles as passive and subordinate to male dominance. They combine beauty and sexuality with innocent desire, which attracts the sympathy of the audience, thus breaking away from the Fascist period pattern of "Woman-as Mother" and "Woman-as-Prostitute".

This thesis focused on the changing representation of roles that women have played in the immediate post war comedy films of neorealist cinema. Even though a generalization would be wrong, it is clear that more resisting female characters begin to emerge. In order to show the features and main aspects of the character's narrative, a table that summarizes the female figures in three films is drawn.

	Carmela	Giulia	Silvia
Age	young	young	young
Physical features	beautiful	ordinary	beautiful
Relation with the patriarchal authority	resistant	obedient	At first resistant, at the end obedient
Main aspects of the character's narrative	Breaches the social norms to overcome the obstacles to be with her lover	Has an affair with an old man, marries to him unwillingly to save the family honor	Coming-of-age, risking her and her family's lives by providing a help to the Americans, falls in love with one of them thus challenges the conventional female code of conduct, but in the end she gives in and marries to a local young man

	Marcella	Luciana	Rosetta
Age	young	young	young
Physical features	beautiful	beautiful	beautiful
Relation with the patriarchal authority	resistant	resistant	In between
Main aspects of the character's narrative	Try to marry with a wealthy men in order to break away from poor social conditions		Fired from her job due to extra-marital pregnancy



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## APPENDIX A

### Credits of the Films

#### Abbreviations:

prod. = production company

dir. = director

sc. = scenario

adapt. = adaptation

cin. = cinematography

des. = design (art direction)

cos. = costumes

mus. = music

ed. = editor

### **Due Soldi di speranza (*Two Cents' Worth of Hope*), 1951**

#### ***Credits***

*prod.*: Universalcine (Sandro Ghenzi); *dir.*: Renato Castellani; *sc.*: Renato Castellani, Ettore M. Margadonna; *adapt.*: Renato Castellani, Titina De Filippo; *cin.*: Arturo Gallea; *mus.*: Alessandro Cicognini; *ed.*: Jolanda Benvenuti.

#### ***Cast***

Maria Fiore (Carmela), Luigi Astarita (Carmela's Father), Vincenzo Musolino (Antonio), Filomena Russo ( His Mother), Gina Mascetti (Signora Flora), Luigi Barone (The Priest), Carmela Cirillo (Giulia), Felicia Lettieri (Signora Artu), Alfonso Del Sorbo (Sacristan), Tomasso Balzano (Luigi Bellomo), Anna Raida (Signore Bellomo), and the inhabitants of Boscotrecase.

**Domenica d'agosto (*Sunday in August*), 1950**

***Credits***

*prod.:* Colonna Film (Sergio Amidei); *dir.:* Luciano Emmer; *sc.:* Sergio Amidei; *adapt.:* Franco Brusati, Luciano Emmer, Giulio Macchi, Cesare Zavattini, Sergio Amidei; *cin.:* Domenico Scala, Leonida Barboni, Ubaldo Marelli; *mus.:* Roman Vlad; *ed.:* Jolanda Benvenuti.

***Cast***

Anna Baldini (Marcella), Franco Interlenghi (Enrico), Anna Di Leo (Yolanda), Massimo Serato (Roberto), Marcello Mastroianni (Ercole), Vera Carmi (Adrianna), Elvy Lissiak (Luciano), Ave Ninchi (Fernanda Meloni), Andrea Campagnoni (Cesare Meloni), Fernando Milani (Catone), Emilio Cigoli (Mantovani), Pina Malgarini (Ines), Anna Medici, Mario Vitale.

**Vivere in pace (*To Live in Peace*), 1946**

***Credits***

*prod.:* Lux Film-Pao (Carlo Ponti); *dir.:* Luigi Zampa; *sc.and adapt.:* Suso Cecchi D'Amico, Aldo Fabrizi, Piero Tellini, Luigi Zampa; *cin.:* Carlo Montuori and Mario Montuori; *des.:* Ivo Battelli; *mus.:* Nina Rota.

***Cast***

Aldo Fabrizi (Uncle Tigna), Gar Moore (Ronald), Miralla Monti (Silvia), John Kitzmiller (Joe), Heinrich Bode (Hans), Ave Ninchi (Corinna), Ernesto Almirante (The Grandfather), Nando Bruno (The Part Secretary), Aldo Silviani (The Doctor), Gino Cavalieri (The Priest), Piero Palermi (Franco), Franco Serpilli (Citta).