Palermo as a Postmodern Carnival
Forms of Resistance in the Cinema of Ciprì and Maresco

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DECLARATION

This PhD is the result of my own work and includes nothing that is the outcome of work done in collaboration. It has not previously been submitted, in part or as a whole, to any university or institution for any degree, diploma or other qualification.

Contents

Abstract

This thesis aims to assess the originality, the aesthetic value and the ethical stance of Daniele Ciprì and Franco Maresco's cinema through an examination of the representation of Palermo in their three feature-length films *Lo zio di Brooklyn / The Uncle from Brooklyn* (1995), *Totò che visse due volte / Totò Who Lived Twice* (1998) and *Il ritorno di Cagliostro / The Return of Cagliostro* (2003) and their works on video. The aim is to demonstrate how their cinema reflects a need to delve deeply into the most unsettling aspects of Sicilian society and acts as a form of resistance against dominant ideologies and sources of power.

In addition to areas traditionally related to film studies, the thesis encompasses perspectives ranging from anthropology, ecocriticism, philosophy and psychoanalysis to cultural, social and urban studies. It examines Ciprì and Maresco's use of humour, drawing on Peter Sloterdijk's studies on Kynicism, Luigi Pirandello's concept of humour as 'the art of the opposite' and the carnivalesque as discussed by Ella Shohat and Robert Stam in their application of Mikhail Bakhtin's studies to cinema.

Focusing on how representations of spatiality convey meanings and reflect the real city, Chapter 1, 'Cityscapes', deals with how urban aspects of contemporary Palermo have inspired Ciprì and Maresco's vision of an enclosed archaic world of ruins and rubble, assessing the impact that the Second World War bombings and the remains of illegal buildings have had on Palermo and considering the phenomenon of the sprawling city. The investigation draws on Bakhtin's notion of 'chronotope' with reference to studies on the road movie and *flânerie*.

Chapter 2, 'Bodies', investigates the most characteristic aspects of Ciprì and Maresco's representation of the human body. It looks at the carnivalesque and the neo-baroque aspects of their cinema and examines how the conflictual relationships between sons and mothers in their all-male world leads to a constant need for sons to affirm their primacy as macho men. It also examines how their representation of masculinity is strongly identified with the feminine and concludes with a discussion on hunger and its association with death and the sacred.

Chapter 3 deals with identity and the concept of the Other seen in relation to a type of Sicilianity claimed by Ciprì and Maresco. It looks at how their representation of Palermo presents an autarchic world controlled by an all-powerful Mafia and a hybrid of Christianity and paganism coupled with an obsessive fear of the hereafter. Finally, it examines their use of mock-documentary, the influence of literary texts and the use of Italian subtitles for the Palermitan dialect spoken in their films, focusing on how dialect predominates relegating Italian to the language of the Other.

The conclusion includes a review of the directors' poetics, focusing on what most characterises their vision of Palermo and evaluating the key findings that emerge from the thesis. It considers how their cinema fits into the context of contemporary art cinema and assesses their impact on Italian cinema, concluding with suggestions for further research.

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This work is dedicated to my wife Jocelyn, without whose priceless help and support this thesis would not have been possible, and to our daughter Sophia, whose joyful presence always uplifts me and who has been just splendid over all these years.

Dedication

To my wife Jocelyn and our daughter Sophia

List of Figures

Note on Translations

With the exception of Italian texts that have been translated and published in English, all translations from Italian texts that appear in this thesis are my own.

Introduction

Ciprì and Maresco's Palermo - Aims and Objectives of the Thesis

Partivano baleniere dai porti
e arrivavano tassì davanti agli alberghi,
presto sommersi nella tenerezza
astuta delle vie, nel gergo
delle insegne, fino ai famosi viali
dove cresceva l'albero della storia
Vittorio Bodini[1]

When Johann Wolfgang von Goethe arrived in Palermo on 2 April 1787, he was deeply impressed by the gardens[2] of what remained of the legendary Arabic-Norman city, while he thought the monuments 'owe[d] their existence and their form to accidental circumstances' (Goethe 2010: 231). As was his usual custom, he went for long walks around the city and soon realised that the inner part of it was a 'confusing labyrinth', 'where a stranger can find his way about only with the help of a guide' (ibid: 227).

More than two centuries later, another illustrious German, Wim Wenders, arrived aiming to make a film about death and Palermo, a film called *Palermo Shooting* (2008).[3] Still a city of ruins, as described by Diderot and D'Alembert in their *Encyclopédie* of 1765, ruins exacerbated by the American bombardments in the

[1] The whalers left the ports / and taxis arrived in front of the hotels, / soon submerged in the astute / tenderness of the streets, in the jargon / of the signs, to the famous boulevards / where the tree of history was growing (Bodini 2010: 88).
[2] Goethe enthused that the Public Gardens close to the harbour were 'the most wonderful spot on earth' (Goethe 2010: 235).
[3] Wenders' film tells the story of a renowned German photographer who decides to leave everything and go to Palermo where, in his continuous wanderings around the city, he falls in love with a woman and meets 'Death' (played by Dennis Hopper). These events lead him to reassess his whole existence.

Second World War, and also for many the Mafia city, an asphalt jungle of police car chases as immortalised in so many films, Palermo is a patchwork of images; not an easy city to shoot.

Wenders, like his fellow countryman two centuries earlier, thought he needed some guidance in such a city 'of extreme vitality, swollen with life, teeming, labyrinthine and full of people in constant movement' (Ledda 2009: 9). He asked Daniele Ciprì and Franco Maresco, who had dedicated their whole collaborative *œuvre* to Palermo, to act as consultants for his locations but both declined, saying that their Palermo did not exist any more (Turrini 2012 and Donadio 2014). One question that naturally arises is whether Wenders had even seen Ciprì and Maresco's films since, while it may be considered the true protagonist of all their films, Palermo is portrayed by them as an abstract, almost invented city.

Ciprì and Maresco's films have transformed Palermo into a city that, in its laws and customs, recalls an enclosed archaic world inhabited only by men, dispersed in a landscape with no defined public places or modern means of transport. With the narrow alleys of the historic old town blurring directly into the open sprawling landscape of the outskirts, they have changed the topography of Palermo, turning it into an apocalyptic city of ruins and rubble. Enormous bodies consuming huge quantities of food, and real-life beggars acting as priests and aristocrats contribute to form a hyperbolic, multi-layered postmodern city-text, where, as in carnival, subversion is the rule.

Their engaged poetics and style of grotesque, with a predilection for *pastiche*, fragmented in structure and rich in filmic[4] and literary/theatrical[5] influences, acts as an irreverent reflection of Palermo, distancing it from the real city in order to reflect

[4] Buñuel, Fellini, Monty Python, Pasolini, Rosi, Ford, Welles and Scorsese, among others.
[5] Beckett, Brecht, Pirandello and Scaldati, among others.

on it, responding to a need to delve deeply into a culture and laying bare its most unsettling elements.

This thesis examines the originality of Ciprì and Maresco's cinematic practices and the distinctiveness of their style and poetics, focusing on the representation of Palermo in their three feature-length films *Lo zio di Brooklyn / The Uncle from Brooklyn* (1995), *Totò che visse due volte / Totò Who Lived Twice* (1998) and *Il ritorno di Cagliostro / The Return of Cagliostro* (2003), and making reference to their extensive video work. It aims to provide, through an interdisciplinary approach, a comprehensive investigation of the city-text. In addition to areas strictly related to film studies, such as audiovisual translation and film adaptation of literary texts, it encompasses perspectives ranging across anthropology, ecocriticism, philosophy, psychoanalysis and cultural, social and urban studies.

Ciprì and Maresco's practices of counter-cinema will be assessed looking at how the two directors set themselves against the dominance of Italian mainstream cinema, actively opposing it and proposing an alternative discourse. Self-reflexive by nature, Ciprì and Maresco's cinema continuously questions cinema itself, creates a distance from the viewer and challenges basic cinematic assumptions and codes. It employs practices inspired by 1960s European art cinema[6] and is reminiscent of the so-called Brazilian Cinema of Hunger.[7] From their earliest works they have made use of the most basic equipment, remaining faithful to the idea of a cinema that is 'hungry' in its own impoverished means of production, free from traditional conventions.

[6] European art cinema features a more naturalistic, fragmented approach; improvisation; use of black-and-white film; long takes; nonprofessional actors; minimalist and eventless stories, characterised by the aimless wandering of the characters.
[7] See chapter 2.3.2.

An important element of Ciprì and Maresco's counter-cinema is the use of humour, the effectiveness of which this thesis will investigate. We will be looking at the use of humour as a distancing technique, more specifically kynical humour as defined by Peter Sloterdijk (1988) with reference to the ancient Greek philosophy of the Kynics,[8] and Luigi Pirandello's (1993) concept of humour as the art of the 'opposite' that, through reflection, disrupts the image created by an initial impression and triggers profound new feelings.[9] Finally, humour related to the carnivalesque and its subversive nature will be discussed taking into account Ella Shohat and Robert Stam's application of Bakhtin's studies to cinema and the different categories of carnivalesque cinema they identify. These categories refer to films that use humour to anarchise institutional hierarchies or direct corrosive laughter at patriarchal authority; films that comically focus, whether visually or verbally, on the 'lower bodily stratum'; films that provocatively overturn a classical aesthetic based on formal harmony and good taste; films that celebrate social inversions and films that parody high art or genres (Shohat and Stam 2014: 305).

The discussion will be placed within the context of post-war Italian history, focusing on key factors that have characterised Italian society and Palermo in particular. These aspects include the influence of the Marshall plan; illegal building; the Italian economic 'miracle' that brought in its wake the passage from a rural to an industrial and finally to a post-industrial society; the Mafia phenomenon including its links with the Church; poverty, focusing on hunger and its connections with death and the sacred; changes in relation to social and interpersonal relationships, including redefinitions of gender, sexuality and family identities; postmodernity and the effects of globalisation; the discussion on cultural identity, focusing in particular on the

[8] See chapter 2.1.2.
[9] See chapter 3.1.

divide between the North and the South of the country, which has been a much debated issue since unification in 1861 and has experienced a significant resurgence since the late 1980s. Linked to this, we will also consider the so called *questione della lingua*, the 'language question', or rather how, after the unification of the country, the attempt to establish a standard form of Italian discriminated against dialects from the South.

The issue of cultural identity is a key theme throughout this thesis. What clearly emerges from Ciprì and Maresco's cinema is the image of a dilapidated South, the vivid fractures produced by the continuous annihilation of peasant culture and its repercussion on people's lives in terms of family and interpersonal relations. This is set within a discourse in which the 'South is seen from the South's point of view', shown as capable of 'independent thought', to recall what the sociologist Franco Cassano advocates in his influential *Il pensiero meridiano*, 'Southern Thought' (1996), for a new South freed from a culture of internal colonialism.[10]

The history of Italy is a history of borders. Until its unification in 1861, Italy was made up of a collection of independent states that were the product of various wars, invasions and border disputes over the centuries. Following unification, notwithstanding the new political unity of the country, these borders remained at a social and political level and were reinforced by the Eurocentric politics of Piedmont's House of Savoy, the new national monarchy. 'Eurocentric' here refers to the hegemonic culture of the West embodied in Europe mostly by the colonial empires of France and England that served as a model to Italy. While France and England were able to define their 'superiority' by reference to their colonies: "*our* 'nations', their "tribes"; *our* "religions", their "superstitions"' (Shohat and Stam 2014: 2), Savoy's Italy had the South to act as its Other. Lacking the colonial power of other

[10] See chapter 2.3.3.

European countries, the new country created a form of internal colonialism (Schneider 1998). While for other countries the South constituted a metaphor for 'an imaginary and mythical entity', associated with faraway places, for Italy it became one of 'the myths on which the nation was built, embodied in just one part of the nation's territory' (Gribaudi 1997: 84).

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1995) is a seminal text on the opposing representation of 'Occident' and 'Orient' operated by the hegemonic culture of the West, which can also be read in terms of the North/South divide. Invoking what Claude Lévi-Strauss has called the 'science of the concrete', Said explains how the mind, 'despite the distraction of a great many vague desires, impulses and images', assigns 'a definite place, function and significance' to things seen as objective realities, while they are actually determined by a discriminating operation (Said 1995: 53). Said wanted to demonstrate how it is a 'universal practice' to designate a familiar space, enclosing it in boundaries, so that the space beyond becomes 'the land of the barbarians' (ibid: 54). This concept is very useful in understanding the history of the Italian South, which from the very beginning was built upon a stratification of continually repeated commonplaces.

In the late 1980s, coinciding with the start of Ciprì and Maresco's collaboration, there was a resurgence of interest in the South of the country among Italian filmmakers. It was in these years, as well, that Italian cinema paid renewed attention to social reality, to such an extent that this wave of socially conscious cinema was compared to the earlier neorealist output of the post-war period, the aesthetic movement most associated with Italian cinema, and became referred to by some as 'neo-neorealism'. What, however, still seems to emerge from most of this so called neo-neorealist cinema is the vision of the South seen as Other, a place detached

from the rest of the country, with its own well-defined characteristics or else a place of the mind.[11]

Palermo, which was mostly ignored by neorealism, gained a certain cinematographic prominence from the 1970s onwards, becoming the context for films on the Mafia and propagating a local industry of film agencies controlled by the Mafia, providing extras and technicians for Rome-based as well as American cinema production companies and studios.[12] This made of Palermo the most rigidly stereotyped city, leading to it never being seen as anything other than the Mafia City. The neo-neorealist directors, who used events that took place in Sicily and Palermo at that time as a source of inspiration for their films, reinforced this stereotyping so that it became an entrenched portrayal in Italian cinema. Their perspective, however, was that of an outsider, where the hero was often someone from the North[13] and the Mafia phenomenon is exploited for its intrinsic entertainment value and emotive impact.

Ciprì and Maresco's cinema stands in opposition to these representations and, while they have clearly drawn inspiration from representations of the South in post-war Italian cinema, theirs is nonetheless a vision that is completely new and groundbreaking.

Ciprì and Maresco's Œuvre

Ciprì and Maresco's films have received critical acclaim at various international film festivals and retrospectives;[14] they have been regularly distributed in France, while in Portugal they have featured at the Vila do Conde film festival since 2001 (Curtas Vila do Conde 2015). In Italy their films have divided opinion, in general attracting

[11] See chapter 1.1.1.
[12] See chapter 3.1.
[13] See chapter 1.1.1.
[14] There have been retrospectives of their films in Rotterdam (International Film festival, 1999), Paris (Cinémathèque, 2000), London (Lux Cinema, 2000), Lisbon (Cinemateca portuguesa, 2001) and New York (Lincoln Center, 2005).

enthusiastic admirers who see them as continuing in the tradition of the best Italian art cinema, but also some detractors, some of whom even questioned whether public money should have been spent on *Totò che visse due volte*.[15]

Both born in Palermo, Daniele Ciprì in 1962 and Franco Maresco in 1958, neither attended any formal film schools. Ciprì's family owned a photo shop in Palermo and, as a teenager, he helped his father as a wedding photographer, subsequently working for a Palermo-based television company, TVM, and for a co-operative specialising in documentaries, Giuseppe Tornatore's CLCT (Borvitz 2014: 366). Franco Maresco was always an avid reader and studied piano; he is an expert on jazz, which has inspired much of his own work as well as that with Ciprì. He started working as a radio presenter on music programmes for Radio Palermo Centrale and was very active in running a film club in Nuovo Brancaccio, an area of Palermo with a high level of Mafia activity (Morreale 2003: 118).

Ciprì and Maresco's first collaboration was an experimental work on video produced in 1986 that then led to them working together in 1989 for TVM. In 1990 their work was broadcast on the Italian private television channel Italia 1 and then on RAI 3, the third Italian National Television network, and included in programmes such as *Fuori orario*, *Avanzi* and *Blob*,[16] until finally in 1992 they had their own programme commissioned by RAI 3, *Cinico TV*. This programme consisted of a series of often improvised, surreal comedic sketches, broadcast during peak time. The series was the cause of much controversy because their representation of life - showing half-naked men with oversized bodies or physical deformities using strong

[15] This was the opinion of Irene Bignardi, leading critic of the daily newspaper *La Repubblica.* Many of these reviews have been collected by Tatti Sanguineti and appear in Valentini and Morreale's book *El sentimiento cinico de la vida* (1999)

[16] These programmes were commissioned by Angelo Guglielmi, Rai Tre director from 1987 to 1994, as part of a policy that aimed to be alternative and counter-current.

language and belching and farting (ibid: 7-11) - was so far removed from the idealised lifestyles proposed by the television programmes of the time.

From these very first works on video, mainly in black and white and set in Palermo, using actors from the streets, Ciprì and Maresco were inspired by the Kynical philosophy of ancient Greece. According to the modern interpretation given to it by Peter Sloterdijk (1988), the Kynics advocate a model based on the anarchism of Diogenes, personified by an outsider who challenged the rules and conventions of state and community through satire and base living conditions. Ciprì and Maresco's characters, strolling in a city of ruins, appear indeed to conform to the model discussed by Sloterdijk as they reject conventional manners and morals and even basic decencies; Kynicism becomes an artistic strategy, a bold display of truth laid bare.

In 1995 their first feature-length film, *Lo zio di Brooklyn / The Uncle from Brooklyn*, was released. Set in an apocalyptic, almost rural Palermo, populated only by men and characterised by the use of black-and-white, wide panoramic and frontal shots, the film is loosely connected around a narrative in which two dwarf Mafia bosses request the Gemelli family to look after a mysterious character, known as the Uncle from Brooklyn. The passage from videos to a feature-length film shows how Ciprì and Maresco's iconoclastic force is part of a deeply personal vision of life and of a strong and coherent poetics. Confirmation of their imaginative drive and distinctive style came with the medium-length film *A memoria / In Memory* (1998), set to an improvisation of the jazz soprano sax player Steve Lacy, in which a series of silent vignettes, based around the theft of an eye from the niche of a 'living' saint, Saint Polyphemus, unfold. The camera, however, through the use of wide shots, reveals Ciprì and Maresco's interest in capturing images of what remains of Palermo's old town, of that part of the city that for years had been left abandoned

among the rubble of the Second World War bombings, as well as ruins from areas outside Palermo, like Ibla, Gibellina and the Belice valley, which was hit by an earthquake in 1968.[17]

In the years between *Lo zio di Brooklyn* and *A memoria*, they carried on making videos in the style of *Cinico TV* and, continuing a line of work they had started with Martin Scorsese in 1992, they recorded interviews with film directors whose work had inspired them: Vittorio De Seta in 1995, Mario Martone in 1996, and Mario Monicelli in 1998. They also made a video, *Ai rotoli* (1996), showing the neglect and abandonment of the Santa Maria dei Rotoli cemetery in Palermo, and featuring Carmelo Bene's voice-off reading from Antonio Pizzuto's novel S*ignorina Rosina* (Pizzuto 1956, 2004).[18]

Immediately after *A memoria*, in 1998, they released their second feature-length film, *Totò che visse due volte / Totò Who Lived Twice*, which shares with *Lo zio di Brooklyn* a vision of man as essentially preoccupied with satisfying his own basic needs and instincts. The film consists of three loosely connected episodes: the first is the story of a penniless drifter, the second the turbulent love story of a pair of middle-aged homosexual lovers, while the last follows the arbitrary miracle working of a Christ-like figure, Totò, and a cruel Mafia boss with the same name and played by the same actor. The latter episode led to the film being accused of constituting an offence to religion as well as fraud since the film had been financed with public money. These events were of particular importance since the film was cleared of both accusations and, as a result, the law of censorship in Italy was changed to the effect that it now only applies for the protection of minors (Morreale 2003: 118-9).

[17] See chapter 1.2.2.
[18] See chapter 2.3.3.

In 1999 they released *Enzo, domani a Palermo / Enzo, Tomorrow in Palermo*, a documentary interspersed with fictional elements about Enzo Castagna, a talent agency director in Palermo with Mafia connections. This was followed by a series of videos dedicated to jazz: Steve Lacy playing Duke Ellington (1999), a Duke Ellington concert in Palermo in 1970 (1999), an homage to Louis Armstrong (2000) and to Miles Davis (2001), and a short called *Arruso*, 'faggot' in Palermitan dialect, dedicated to Pasolini, recalling Pasolini's time in Palermo during the shooting of *I racconti di Canterbury* / *Canterbury Tales* (1972) and featuring interviews with men who, presumably, had had sexual relations with Pasolini or who simply comment on Pasolini's homosexuality.

Their theatre debut, *Palermo può attendere* ('Palermo can wait'), performed at the Venice Biennale in 2002, showed actors interacting with images of Palermo projected onto three different screens, and was also the start of their collaboration with the playwright Franco Scaldati, whose vision of a dilapidated Palermo as a city of ruins has played an important part in shaping Ciprì and Maresco's poetics.

In 2003 their third and last feature-length film was released, *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* / *The Return of Cagliostro*, marking a point of departure from the first two films. While in *Lo zio di Brooklyn* and *Totò che visse due volte* Palermo is in fact the true protagonist of the film, in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* Palermo is mainly evoked, transformed into a city of memory. Adopting a mock-documentary format, the film cuts between interviews with various film critics who express different opinions about the fortunes of a fictional Sicilian film production house, Trinacria Cinematografica, and the story of the owners of the production house, the La Marca brothers, and the various people who work with them.

In 2004, they released *Come inguaiammo il cinema italiano. La vera storia di Franco e Ciccio / How We Got Italian Cinema into Trouble: Franco & Ciccio's Real*

Story, a documentary about the Palermitan comedic duo Franco Franchi (1928-1992) and Ciccio Ingrassia (1922-2003). In 2005 they returned to theatre with *Viva Palermo e Santa Rosalia* ('Long Live Palermo and St. Rosalia'), a play with music by Salvatore Bonafede - a jazz pianist who also wrote the music for *Il ritorno di Cagliostro*, and the jazz trumpet musician Enrico Rava - the format of which resembles *Palermo può attendere*. The play involves Franco Scaldati and Mimmo Cuticchio, one of the greatest Sicilian *cantastorie,*[19] telling and singing stories about Palermo's past and its legends, accompanied by a series of projected images.[20]

They returned to television in 2006 on the commercial channel LA7 with *I migliori nani della nostra vita*.[21] Continuing in the style of *Cinico TV*, they proposed a form of comedy that combined the grotesque with social and political comment. It was then followed in 2007 by *Ai confini della pietà,*[22] where their satire focuses again on Sicilian vicissitudes, targeting in particular the Mafia world as well as the rhetoric of the Anti Mafia culture.[23]

After this experience, they decided to part ways and have since continued in different directions. Ciprì left Palermo and moved to Rome, where he has worked as a cinematographer for other directors[24] and made two of his own feature length films. The first, *E' stato il figlio / It Was the Son* (2012), is set in Palermo but shot in Puglia, and tells the story of a family waiting to receive state compensation because their

[19] Literally 'someone who sings stories.'
[20] The images usually used by the *cantastorie*, according to an ancient practice, are usually painted, printed or drawn on different materials, or, as in the case of Cuticchio, puppets are often used.
[21] The title is a parodic reference to William Wyler's 1946 film *The Best Years of Our Lives*. Translated into Italian as *I migliori anni della nostra vita*, they have replaced 'anni' (meaning years) with its anagram 'nani', meaning dwarfs, hence the full title means 'The best "dwarfs" of our lives'.
[22] The reference this time is to Steven Spielberg, John Landis, George Miller and Joe Dante's film *Twilight Zone: The Movie* (1983), the Italian title of which was *Ai confini della realtà* [At the borders of reality]. In Ciprì and Maresco's title '*realtà*' ('reality'), becomes 'pietà' ('pity').
[23] Giorgio Castellani, a director of trash films set in Sicily, is the protagonist of the first two episodes. His real name is Giuseppe Greco, the son of Michele Greco known as 'il Papa' ('the Pope'), one of the most powerful Mafiosi in recent decades.
[24] E.g. Marco Bellocchio's *Vincere / Win* (2009) and *Bella addormentata / Dormant Beauty* (2012), and Sabina Guzzanti's *La trattativa / The Negotiation* (2014).

daughter has been accidentally killed by some Mafia criminals. When the money finally arrives, they decide to spend it on a luxury car that then becomes the cause of their ruin. The second, *La buca / The Hole* (2014), is set in a city that has no specific geographical references and is shot in Cinecittà and the outskirts of Rome. It tells the story of a failed lawyer and a released prisoner who was innocent of the crime he was accused of. The lawyer believes he can obtain a huge compensation pay-out for the ex-prisoner but he fails in this endeavour.

Maresco, who has continued to work based in Palermo, first produced a documentary entitled *Io sono Tony Scott, ovvero come l'Italia fece fuori il più grande clarinettista del jazz* / *I am Tony Scott. The Story of How Italy Got Rid of the Greatest Jazz Clarinettist* (2010). The documentary recounts the life of the Italian American jazz clarinettist Anthony Joseph Sciacca, known as Tony Scott, from his childhood and youth in the United States up until his death following a long illness in Rome in 2007. Maresco followed this up with a docufiction, *Belluscone. Una Storia siciliana* / *Belluscone. A Sicilian Story* (2014). The film purports to document the film critic Tatti Sanguineti's search for Franco Maresco as an expedient to talk about the impact that the media tycoon and long-term Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi has had on Sicily, featuring people from different social and cultural backgrounds who are asked what they think of Berlusconi and of the Mafia. At the Venice Film Festival in 2015 Maresco presented his documentary *Gli uomini di questa città io non li conosco – Vita e teatro di Franco Scaldati / I Do Not Know the Men of This City – The Life and Theatre of Franco Scaldati* dedicated to Franco Scaldati, who died in 2013. Through a series of interviews and clips from Scaldati's work and his appearances in various films, the documentary tells the story of Scaldati's relationship with Palermo as well as the influence he had on Ciprì and Maresco.

Postmodernity and Postmodernism

This part first looks at postmodernity as the historical time in which Ciprì and Maresco's collaborative *œuvre* is contextualised, spanning from 1986 to 2007, with its focus on the representation of the urban environment and urban life. It then looks at postmodernism as an aesthetic category that can be applied to their cinema and how this relates to postmodernity. The aim is to provide an introduction to relevant aspects of postmodernity and the postmodern, which will then be dealt with in the three different chapters of the thesis: Cityscapes, Bodies and Identities.

Postmodernity

According to Ewa Mazierska and Laura Rascaroli's definition, postmodernity is 'Western society's current cultural, economic and socio-political condition'. It is a condition characterised by an array of phenomena connected to a 'postindustrial and service oriented' economy, with consequences such as 'fragmentation of the urban habitat', 'increasing cosmopolitanism and multi-ethnicity', 'the globalization of culture and shedding of barriers that once existed between "high" and "low" culture' (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2003: 9).

John Foot's *Milan Since the Miracle* (2001), most recently published in Italian in 2015, provides a key reading on postmodernity and Italian cities. The 'loss of identity' that Foot (2015: 99) says characterises Milan, as the consequence of a global culture imposed on local cultures, determined also by dramatic changes Italy had experienced, can equally be applied to Palermo. These changes include deindustrialisation, which took effect from the beginning of the 1980s and the impact of which, as we will see, Ciprì and Maresco capture inexorably in their films. They also include the so called *Mani pulite* ('Clean Hands') operation, launched in 1992

and leading to the arrest of prominent politicians on the grounds of corruption, ushering in the end of the most traditional Italian political parties and the consequent rise to power of Silvio Berlusconi. With his populist image of a self-made man (Foot 2015: 119) and thanks also to his powerful television empire, Berlusconi served as Italy's Prime Minister for nine years,[25] positioning himself in opposition to those politicians who had been condemned by the 'Clean Hands' operation but in reality continuing a system that he himself had been part of.

Another important change Italy experienced in the 1980s was the phenomenon of mass migration, which had a significant impact on national identity, seeing Italy abruptly changing from a country characterised by emigration to a country characterised by immigration;[26] and linked to this the rise of new and reactionary political forces like the secessionist Lega Nord, which threw into question the unity of the country itself.[27] On the one hand the politics of the Lega Nord re-proposed an anachronistic and discriminatory view of the South seen in terms of racial differences, on the other the debate on immigration revealed an attitude that, even at its most liberal, sees the immigrant primarily as the Other, as a backdrop against which to discuss issues concerning Italian social realities.[28]

As the largest southern Italian city after Naples, Palermo has inevitably been affected by these changes. At end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, it

[25] From 1994 to 1995, from 2001 to 2006 and, finally, from 2008 to 2011.

[26] The phenomenon of immigration in Italy had already started in the 1970s with the arrival of Tunisian labourers in Sicily and women from Latin America, Asia and the ex Italian colonies. These first arrivals however also coincided with a significant reduction in the flow of emigration from Italy, after the oil crisis of 1973 led to a reduction in the demand for foreign labour in countries like Germany and Switzerland, the main destinations for Italian emigrants after the war. Internal emigration from the South to the North also slowed down, partly as a consequence of the improvements in the welfare system in the South (Pugliese 2002: 58-9).

[27] The Lega Nord formed part of coalition governments, won important seats in Parliament, and controlled the city councils of cities such as Milan.

[28] After the first wave of arrivals in March 1991, when 26,000 people crossed the Straits of Otranto in boats and craft of every type, Albanian migration to Italy became very significant within the process of re-elaboration of a new Italian national identity, reflecting, as it did, the situation of those many Italians who had migrated from Italy in the past.

experienced a period of crisis that coincided with the so-called *Primavera di Palermo*, the 'Palermo Spring', a time of social and political change and renewal that succeeded a period, from 1978 to the early 1990s, of intense Mafia wars.[29]

The Palermo Spring is much associated with the figure of Leoluca Orlando, mayor of Palermo in the 1980s and 1990s.[30] Orlando made a stand against the Mafia and caused an important change of direction in the public administration of Palermo, which for years had been weakened not only by corruption but also by a lack of continuity.[31] Under Orlando, social and cultural initiatives that aimed to bring an end to corrupt systems and practices were promoted in an attempt to eradicate the Mafia-driven culture, which had made Palermo one of the Italian cities most badly affected by illegal building practices.

This climate of change characterised other Southern Italian cities as well, Naples in particular, where, after the election of the left-wing Mayor Antonio Bassolino in 1993,[32] there was talk of a new 'Neapolitan renaissance' (Marlow-Mann 2012: 1). The discussion on identity brought to the fore a feeling of pride in local culture attested to by the emergence of new trends in theatre and music[33] along with the birth of an independent cinema defined as the New Neapolitan Cinema or School (ibid: 2), whose key exponents Mario Martone,[34] Antonio Capuano[35] and Pappi

[29] Many illustrious anti-Mafia figures became Mafia targets, like the judges Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino, both killed by the Mafia in 1992.
[30] Orlando returned to the role in 2012.
[31] As Nino Alongi observes, a 'strange destiny' seems to befall the mayors of Palermo: 'once their period in office is over they either disappear into their private lives, end up in court, are killed or leave, slamming the door behind them' (Alongi 1998: 52).
[32] Bassolino was mayor of Naples from 1993-2000. After this he was accused of and put on trial for involvement in aggravated fraud against the State and fraud regarding public works, between 2000 and 2004, while he was president of the Campania region.
[33] A form of theatre that stepped away from usual theatrical conventions and took to the streets, and music that adopted popular genres such as rap to recount the difficulties of life in the South (Fofi 1997).
[34] See chapter 1.2.3 and 2.2.2.
[35] See chapter 3.3.

Corsicato[36] draw on Naples' cultural heritage in their work. Inspired by the centrality that cities gained with postmodernity,[37] these directors became part of a trend involving other European directors such as Pedro Almodóvar, Danny Boyle, Pavel Lungin and Julius Machulski, who also focused on the harshness and conflict of urban environments (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2003).

Despite elements in common with directors from the Neapolitan School, Ciprì and Maresco differ considerably from them. The main difference consists in the fact that while for the Neapolitan School directors the cinematic text of the city is rigorously based on the real city, Ciprì and Maresco instead transform Palermo into an almost abstract city. With the exception of Roberta Torre,[38] with whom they collaborated, Ciprì and Maresco did not share practices, experiences and actors with any other directors, unlike the Neapolitan directors who worked extensively together, even creating joint works and drawing on a 'common pool of actors and technicians, and the shared production context' (Marlow-Mann 2012: 3). Ciprì and Maresco nevertheless share features and preoccupations that can be defined as 'postmodern' with Martone and Capuano, as well as Alessandro Piva[39] from Bari and directors from the North like Silvio Soldini.[40]

[36] See chapter 3.3.
[37] David Clarke (1997: 1) points out how 'the histories of film and city are imbricated to such an extent that it is unthinkable that the cinema could have developed without the city'. Mazierska and Rascaroli recall how cityscapes and urban life had been captured in different genres in modernity as well as in postmodernity. For instance in the 'city symphonies' of the 1920s, epitomised by Dziga Vertov's documentary *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) (ibid: 4) or in film *noir*, or gangster films, which are intimately linked to the city; or in science fiction with films like Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927), an 'icon of the apocalyptic vision of modernity' (ibid), and Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982), the latter 'epitomising', as they say, 'the post-industrial decay, vast immigration and architectural pastiche of the postmodern metropolis' (ibid: 5).
[38] See chapter 1.2.2, 2.2.2 and 3.3.
[39] See chapter 3.3.
[40] See chapter 1.2.3.

Postmodernism

It is important at this juncture to determine what is meant by the postmodern, given the overuse of the term and the way it has been attached to various and often contradictory conditions; already in the 1980s it seemed to have become emptied of meaning, becoming, as Umberto Eco (1995: 528) defines it *bon à tout faire*, a 'catch-all'.

We could adopt the view that postmodern cinema coincides with postmodernity given that in Fredric Jameson's influential book *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991) postmodernism is defined as 'the cultural discourse of the third stage of capitalism, that is, late or multinational capitalism' (Jameson 1991: 9). We could also claim, however, that the postmodern existed well before this, in view of the tendency that scholars have to seek examples from ever more distant historical times, adopting Eco's view that even Homer's style could be defined as postmodern (Eco 1995: 528).

Eco's novel *Il nome della rosa* (1980)[41] is itself useful not only as a good example of a postmodern text - ironically incorporating references to high culture within a popular genre, the thriller - but also because the later editions of the novel include an Afterword[42] that offers some interesting reflections on postmodernism. Eco points out that 'post', prefixed to 'modern', gives the idea of something that is not modern any more, but in what sense exactly is it 'post', Eco asks? Is it a development, a denial or a rejection of modernism?

One answer is that it is mainly a rejection of what *avant-garde* modernist artists believed, as expressed by Walter Benjamin in his *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936, 1998). Benjamin argued that the authority or

[41] Published in English as *The Name of the Rose* (1983, 2004).
[42] Published in English as a separate book with the title *Reflections on the Name of the Rose* (1994).

autonomy of original works of art derives from their unreproducibility, which gives them a magical aura, a charismatic halo that surrounds authentic art objects because they are one-offs, unique, irreplaceable and hence priceless. If we look at what happened with 1960s pop art and the work of Andy Warhol we can see how Warhol turned mechanical reproduction itself into art, transferring a photo image to a silkscreen, which is laid on the canvas and inked from the back. With Andy Warhol there ceases to be a distinction between high and low art and we witness what Jameson in his definition of postmodern calls 'the full entry of art into the world of commodity production' (Jameson 1991: 5).

Returning to Eco's reflections on *The Name of the Rose*, Eco says that 'The postmodern reply to the modern consists of recognising that the past, since it cannot really be destroyed, because its destruction leads to silence, must be revisited: but with irony, not innocently' (Eco 1995: 529). This recalls Jameson's definition of postmodern films as nostalgia-films, films that Jameson says are not at all, however, a 'matter of some old fashioned "representation" of historical content' (Jameson 1991: 19). As Mazierska and Rascaroli point out, quoting Jameson, postmodern films are characterised 'by an obliteration of the historical past and by a strong sense of nostalgia' that hides 'an inability to understand the past behind the reproduction of stereotypical images' (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2003: 9).

It is a sort of past that can be explained by what Maurizio Viano (1993) in his reading of Pasolini's cinema calls 'analogy': 'Whereas reconstruction forgets the present and aims at an absolute past, analogy translates the past into the present and suggests a series of relations of resemblance and difference for the audience to recognise and to judge. If reconstruction ultimately abuses history, holding it up to the paranoid myth of discovering "what really happened", analogy uses personal and historical knowledge to gain insights for the present' (Viano 1993: 136-7). The linear

concept of time is deliberately refused, and the past in the end becomes 'nothing more than a style or a more or less revocable aesthetic choice' (Eco 1995: 529).

Postmodernism becomes a self-interrogation on art itself. Texts are made of other texts; or, to quote Eco, 'plot could be found also in the form of quotation of other plots' (Eco 1995: 513). The boundaries of texts therefore become permeable; so permeable that often the term *pastiche* is used to define the postmodern, in concord with Jameson's view of the postmodern as 'the random cannibalisation of all the styles of the past' (Jameson 1991: 18).

These preoccupations with the past characterise Ciprì and Maresco's films as well as the films of the aforementioned directors, representing a new departure in the panorama of 1990s Italian cinema, which, according to Vito Zagarrio (2001: 36), in the previous decade had reached its lowest point in terms of quality. [43] Ciprì and Maresco's cinema may also be defined as postmodern for its self-reflexive nature; the way it attempts to subvert the stylistic and narrative conventions of mainstream cinema and demands an active role from the spectator; the fact that it disregards the divide between high and popular art and mixes different periods and styles of art in a multi-layered pastiche; and finally often overturns the typical portrayals of places.

Ciprì and Maresco will also be considered in terms of the 'neo-baroque', which, according to Angela Ndalianis (2004), can be seen as a category of the postmodern. Neo-baroque is particularly useful in defining specific characteristics of Ciprì and Maresco's cinema, such as, for instance, its subversive nature. The neo-baroque will be discussed with reference to a certain type of art cinema, to artists who

[43] The impulse towards the 'new' in Italian art and culture had always been a constant from the beginning of XX century, observes Zagarrio (2001: 9-11). It also characterised the spirit of 1968 and persisted in Italy throughout the 1970s, before a period of decline in the 1980s. For example the Futurist Movement in the 1920s had as a specific aim the desire to break with the traditional Art Academies and to create something new and 'modern'. After this, neorealism strove to find a new way of looking at reality and from this flowed the work of Pasolini and Bertolucci and of all those who came after.

work creatively within specific formal canons, and is especially relevant with regard to the discussion on the body, considering the baroque's preoccupation with the human body and its predilection for large forms.[44]

Literature Review

Ciprì and Maresco's cinema has attracted the interest of many critics and scholars in Italy and increasingly from other countries, mostly resulting in articles in specialised journals or magazines. To date, however, there have been only two monographs dedicated to their work: the first, *Ciprì e Maresco* (2003), by the Palermitan scholar Emiliano Morreale, and the second *Controcorrente: Die kruden Visionen von Ciprì und Maresco* (2014), by the German scholar Sieglinde Borvitz, which represents the most complete study on their work and also reviews the individual output of the two directors after their separation.

Morreale's book focuses on the centrality of Palermo for Ciprì and Maresco and offers different insights into aspects of Sicilian culture that shed light on their work. It deals with the importance of memory and documents the different phases of development of their poetics, with reference also to their works on video. Having known the two directors from the very beginning, Morreale conducted a series of interviews with them at different points in their collaboration, providing some valuable insights into their conception of cinema and vision of life.

Borvitz's book, on the other hand, focuses more on the counter-current and engaged nature of Ciprì and Maresco's cinema, their 'Kynicism' and their experimental, grotesque aesthetic, and how it can be seen as a reflection on contemporary Italian society. Borvitz, who also includes interviews with the two directors in her book, has a wider perspective, focusing for instance on biopolitics,

[44] See chapter 2.1.

seen, as in Foucault, as a control apparatus exerted over a population as a whole. She also examines issues such as the power of the media in contemporary society, discussed in particular with Maresco, with reference to his film *Belluscone. Una storia italiana*. Other important aspects that Borvitz considers are the Mafia phenomenon and issues of identity related to the rise of the secessionist Lega Nord political party.

Other significant works on Ciprì and Maresco are those of Flavio De Bernardinis, Stefano Della Casa, Goffredo Fofi, Bruno Fornara, Virgilio Fantuzzi, Enrico Ghezzi, Paola Malanga, Gregorio Napoli, Edoardo Sanguineti and Valentina Valentini. Most of these contributions are collected in *El sentimiento cinico de la vida*, edited by Valentina Valentini and Emiliano Morreale (1999), which, though limited to Ciprì and Maresco's works up until 1999, represent a very valuable source on the topic.

Many authors have recognised the high value of Ciprì and Maresco's work in the context of Italian as well as international cinema; Fofi, for instance, places Ciprì and Maresco among the world's greatest directors in his book *I grandi registi della storia del cinema. Dai Lumière a Cronenberg, da Chaplin a Ciprì e Maresco* (Fofi 2008b). These authors have reviewed the various cinematic influences on Ciprì and Maresco, ranging from classic American cinema to European art cinema, comparing them to directors such as Buñuel (Fantuzzi 2006), Pasolini and Scorsese;[45] the postmodern aesthetic of their work, the way they play with different film genres and conventions and the spectator's expectations (Ghezzi 1999); the way they use and transform the landscape (De Bernardinis 1999; Fantuzzi 2006; Valentini 1999); their choice of representing an all-male world with no children (Fornara 1999a); sexual

[45] In particular the macho culture that emerges from the work of Martin Scorsese, himself of Sicilian origin (Morreale 2003: 11).

obsessions and public indecency similar to that of the ancient Kynics (De Bernardinis 1999; Fornara 1999b); their relationship with religion in the creation of an archaic world modelled on a mixture of pagan and Catholic traditions (Fantuzzi 2006; Fornara 1999a); and their sense of belonging, their Sicilianity.

Fofi and Morreale have been my main points of reference with regard to the discussion on Sicilianity, which is central to this thesis. Fofi has written extensively on Palermo and the Italian South in general, placing Ciprì and Maresco's work in the context of a certain resurgence in the arts that characterised Southern Italian cities in the 1990s (Fofi 1997).[46]

All the above-mentioned contributions have been of great utility in the writing of this thesis. I have critically questioned some of them and developed further some of the concepts and insights of others. For instance, this thesis refers to different types of studies (social, urban, anthropological, etc.) to provide evidence of how the 'abstractness' of Ciprì and Maresco's city-text can be seen as a reflection on changes in the environment and in people's lives in modern-day Palermo. It applies Bakhtin's theories of the carnivalesque in a more in-depth way to Ciprì and Maresco, and also expands his theories to encompass the relevance of the notion of the 'chronotope', which deals with how the inseparability of spatiality and temporality in a text is constructed. [47] It looks at the influence of classical Kynicism, which is also a main topic in Borvitz's book, highlighting the complexities but also the contradictions that Ciprì and Maresco's representation of Palermo reveals in relation to this aesthetic.

Another important aspect of this thesis is the focus on the representation of the body, also discussed at length by Morreale and Borvitz, especially as regards the discussion on Western canons of beauty juxtaposed with the aesthetic of the body

[46] See the part on Postmodernity and Postmodernism in this introduction.
[47] See chapter 1.1.

proposed by Ciprì and Maresco. This thesis also assesses the importance of the feminine in Ciprì and Maresco's male-dominated world, a matter also discussed by Valentini (1999), Malanga (1999) and by Monica Seger (2015) in her *Landscapes in Between. Environmental Change in Modern Italian Literature and Film*.

Seger's book dedicates the final chapter to Ciprì and Maresco's cinema and is particularly useful for its emphasis on environmental issues. Seger sets her discussion in the context of ecocriticism, a discipline that examines the roles of the human and nonhuman in crafting the landscape, and explores the ethics of ecological engagement, turning an environmentally critical eye to the city and landscapes of the urban.[48] Among these aspects are the merging of the urban and the rural, contrasts between interiors and exteriors and the way the human occupies space and becomes part of the landscape.

In her book, Seger refers to my publications on Ciprì and Maresco, as among those of 'a select group of scholars [that] has turned a sharper critical gaze to representations of the nonhuman in Italian texts, often privileging physical nature over its symbolic iterations' (ibid: 7). My publications are also quoted in Borvitz's book and other contributions.

As this thesis has grown out of my individual publications, I would like to mention the most important of these. **'**Palermo in the Films of Ciprì and Maresco', in *Italian Cityscapes, Culture and Urban Change in Contemporary Italy*, edited by Robert Lumley and John Foot (2004)[49] focuses on urban changes in Palermo as

[48] Seger's book looks at how Italy has grappled with the environmental legacy of rapid industrial growth and haphazard urban planning since its economic boom in the late 1950s. One notable effect is a preponderance of interstitial landscapes such as abandoned fields, polluted riverbanks, and makeshift urban gardens. *Landscapes in Between* analyses authors and filmmakers – Italo Calvino, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Gianni Celati, Simona Vinci, and Daniele Ciprì and Franco Maresco – who turn to these spaces as productive models for coming to terms with the modified natural environment.

[49] Lumley and Foot's book, which has also been translated into Italian ['Il Saggiatore', *Le città visibili*, Milan, 2007], has been of key importance for this research as it collects a series of interdisciplinary contributions from scholars of urban studies, literature, architecture and design. It examines the

represented in Ciprì and Maresco's cinema,[50] and deals at the same time with how bodies are represented in relation to the space they inhabit.[51] Another paper 'Subtitling the Italian South', in *New Trends in Audiovisual Translation***,** edited by Jorge Díaz-Cintas (2009), [52] deals with subtitling. Ciprì and Maresco, along with other directors from the South of Italy, have chosen to subtitle their films, which mainly use the Sicilian dialect, into Italian. My analysis is related to linguistic and translational issues as well as to cultural identity issues.[53] I would also like to mention 'The Cinema of Ciprì and Maresco: Kynicism as a Form of Resistance', in *Italian Film Directors in the New Millennium,* edited by William Hope (2010).[54] This paper places Ciprì and Maresco in the context of Italian cinema and focuses on their conception of humour in general and Kynicism in particular.[55]

As far as my publications in Italian are concerned, the paper '*Totò che visse due volte* e Il commiato funebre di Ciprì e Maresco' was included in the book, edited by Enrico Ghezzi and Stefano Curti (2006), that accompanied the release of the DVD *Totò che visse due volte* and deals with spatiality and concepts of identity. Among my other papers in Italian are: 'Palermo e il commiato funebre del cinema di Ciprì e Maresco', published in *La forma del passato: Questioni di identità in opere letterarie e cinematografiche italiane a partire dagli ultimi anni Ottanta,* edited by Sabina Gola

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transformation of the Italian city from the 1950s to the present with particular attention to questions of identity, migration and changes in urban culture. It shows how major demographic movements and cultural shifts threw into relief new conceptions of the city in which old boundaries had become problematic.

[50] See chapter 1.

[51] See chapter 2.

[52] Díaz-Cintas' book is an interdisciplinary collection of articles written by different experts in audiovisual translation. It introduces readers to some of the main linguistic and cultural challenges that translators encounter when translating films and other audiovisual productions.

[53] See chapter 3.3.

[54] Hope's book is a collection of essays that examine the themes and styles that characterise the new millennium work of Italian film directors from different generations. The essays illustrate the way in which contrasting images of Italy emerge in the work of different directors.

[55] Parts from this article are taken up throughout my thesis. In particular, chapter 2.1 is dedicated to Kynicism.

and Laura Rorato (2007),[56] in which I focus on the concept of memory and the curating of history that Ciprì and Maresco employ in their work.[57] Finally, I would like to mention 'Influenze pirandelliane nel *Ritorno di Cagliostro* di Ciprì e Maresco', in *Dalla letteratura al film (e ritorno),* Acta Universitatis Palackianae Olomucensis Facultas Philosophica, Philologica 88, University of Olomouc, edited by Alessandro Marini, Jiří Špička, Lenka Kováčová (2006),[58] where my contribution is part of a section dedicated to Luigi Pirandello, whose influence on Ciprì and Maresco I explore with reference to film adaptation of a literary text and to Pirandello's concept of humour, his views about life and the function of the arts, which have often been discussed in relation to Ciprì and Maresco's work. [59]

Chapter Outline and Methodology

This part provides a chapter outline of the thesis as well as a description of the methodology that will be applied in each chapter. Each topic covered in the three chapters: 'Cityscapes', 'Bodies' and 'Identities', is investigated through an interdisciplinary approach that, together with those traditionally adopted in film studies, includes perspectives from disciplines related to the topic discussed.

Chapter 1, Cityscapes, deals with how urban aspects of today's Palermo have permeated Ciprì and Maresco's vision of the city, focusing on how representations of spatiality convey meanings and reflect the real city. In section 1.1, 'The Road', the emphasis is on the narrative role of the road in the city-text. The investigation draws on the application of Bakhtin's notion of 'chronotope', which deals with how the

[56] Gola and Rorato's book offers an analysis of the works of various Italian writers and film directors of the last twenty years and looks at different periods of transition, such as the end of a century and the start of a new one, in the context of the European Union, that inevitably leads on to reflections on the concepts of national identity and citizenship.

[57] Parts from this essay are discussed in all the chapters of the thesis and in particular in chapter 1.2.

[58] The book deals with relations between Italian literature and cinema, including adaptations from one medium to the other as well as mutual influences in terms of style and form.

[59] Most of the work from this contribution is discussed in chapter 3.1.

inseparability of spatiality and temporality in a text is constructed and conventionalised by different genres and authors (Bakhtin 2006). The city-text will also be analysed with reference to the road movie, leading to considerations on a certain type of *flânerie*, a rural *flânerie*, that characterises the narrative.

Section 1.2, 'Rubble', covers the impact that the Second World War bombings, and the remains of illegally built half-completed structures, have had on Palermo's cityscape and how this forms a consistent backdrop in Ciprì and Maresco's films.

Section 1.3, 'Sprawling City', reflects on the rampant expansion of the city, creating constantly shifting and undefined boundaries between the city and the countryside and leading to the so-called 'urbanised countryside' or 'sprawling city'. Taking into account the transformations that marked the passage of Italy from a rural to an industrial country, as well as historical, social and urban elements, we will see how, and to what extent, the cityscape in Ciprì and Maresco reflects aspects of contemporary Palermo. Pasolini believed that an artist 'holds a responsibility to represent the world in which he or she lives' (Seger 2015: 16), and that his or her work should be directed towards protecting a cultural landscape, beliefs that are shared by Ciprì and Maresco.

The main research areas that are covered in chapter 1 are: ecocritisism (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996; Seger 2015), postmodernity in film (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2003), urban studies on Palermo (Alongi 1997; Carta 1996; Cometa 1998; Rossi-Doria 1996) and on Italian cities in general (Cervellati 2000; Ginsborg 2001; Foot 2015; Zevi 2007); anthropological studies and postmodernity (Augé 2009; Cassano 1996).

Chapter 2, 'Bodies', places the discussion in the context of influences from directors from the past, contrasting the approaches used by Ciprì and Maresco with

those of other contemporary Italian directors, and investigates what most characterises the bodies 'displayed' in Ciprì and Maresco's films, including how they occupy space. More specifically, section 2.1, 'The Carnivalesque', looks at how the 'neo-baroque', acknowledged as a formal quality of the postmodern by Ndalianis (2004), is useful in understanding Ciprì and Maresco's cinema and how, with its links to carnival, it assumes particular relevance in the discussion on the body. The neo-baroque has frequently been associated with carnival, since both are based on the idea of excess. Carnival, with its emphasis on transgression and subversion, is also discussed in relation to the philosophy of the Kynics through the modern interpretation of 'Kynicism' as proposed by Sloterdijk (1988). Finally, with reference to the work of Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1988), we will see how Ciprì and Maresco's unconventional portrayal of the human body links to forms of resistance developed by people who live on the margins of society.

The works discussed in this chapter also include Gilles Deleuze's *Le Pli. Leibniz et le Baroque* (1988), published in English as *The Fold* (1992b), which elucidates the concept of the neo-baroque, as well as Omar Calabrese's seminal *L'età neobarocca* (1987), published in English with the title *Neo-Baroque: A Sign of the Times* (1992) and more recently again in Italian in *Il Neobarocco. Forma e dinamiche della cultura contemporanea* (2013). Bakhtin is again of particular relevance in this chapter, in this instance with his *Rabelais and his World* (2009), in which traditional carnival and its close associations with peasant culture is explored.

In section 2.2, 'An All-Male World', we will see how claustrophobic and enclosed Ciprì and Maresco's world is, with its rigidly divided interpersonal relationships, from family nuclei to relationships with the other sex. The first part of this section looks at how this macho culture is represented, with very limited family units consisting only of men, most often comprising solely a 'mother' (played by a

man) and an adult son. However hyperbolic this representation is, featuring paradoxical and surreal situations, we can nonetheless perceive characteristics of the typical Italian family as it has evolved after the Second World War, which exhibited 'a very strong overlay between family and economic activity' and experienced a 'strong reassertion of traditional proximities between individual family members' (Ginsborg 2001: 75).

The second part deals with the uneasiness of these relationships leading to a constant need for the sons to affirm their primacy as macho men. Finally, the third part reviews the films from a psychoanalytical perspective. Drawing on Kaja Silverman's *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (1992a), it discusses how Ciprì and Maresco's representation of masculinity has strong elements of identification with the feminine, expressed through a desperate longing.

Other research areas considered in this section are studies on Italian society, in relation to the role of women (Clark 1986; Ginsborg 2001), the Sicilian matriarchal system and models of masculinity (Reich 2004; Sciascia 1997); the depiction of family relationships and the crisis of masculinity explored by other Italian film-makers, such as Nanni Moretti (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2004).

Section 2.3, 'Hunger', examines the different forms and interconnections related to hunger as a state, in particular its association with death. More specifically it considers the role of hunger in peasant culture and the carnivalesque, taking into account social changes in post-war Italy and the Italian cinema context, from neorealism to directors such as Fellini and Ferreri and, above all, Pasolini (part 2.3.1). Other influences considered are the Brazilian Cinema Novo, where the theme of hunger is metaphorically applied to a work method transforming the lack of technical resources into an expressive force, and the dark comedic cinema of Monty Python.

Hunger and death are discussed with reference to the meaning death acquires in Ciprì and Maresco, especially with regard to the sacred (part 2.3.3). The chapter concludes with an evaluation of the cinema of Ciprì and Maresco in the light of Franco Cassano's *Il Pensiero meridiano* (1996), 'Southern Thought', which provides the opportunity to compare the vision of life that emerges from Ciprì and Maresco's cinema to that invoked by Cassano for a new South.

Other research areas considered in this section are: hunger in Italian popular traditions by Piero Camporesi in his *Il paese della fame* (1978, 2009)[60] and *Il pane selvaggio* (1980, 2004);[61] the Rabelaisian tradition of the grotesque in relation to the 'material bodily lower stratum', analysed with reference to *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975) as investigated by Janis Udris (1988) and to Pasolini's cinema (Fagioli 2000; Saggioro 2012; Viano 1993); the Brazilian Cinema Novo's aesthetic of hunger **(**Shohat and Stam 2014); and, finally, considerations on the vision of death in Pasolini's cinema (Rohdie 1995: 149; Viano 1993) compared with that in Ciprì and Maresco.[62]

Chapter 3 deals with 'identity' and the construction of the Other; it investigates urban, social and anthropological issues raised in the previous chapters, focusing on cultural aspects related to the Mafia and religion; examines important components of Ciprì and Maresco's cinema like their use of the *mock-documentary* with the subversive intent typical of this genre (Roscoe and Hight 2001); and considers the influence of literary texts and the use of Italian subtitles for the Palermitan dialect spoken in their films.

In section 3.1, 'Sicilianity', the concept of identity is seen in relation to a

[60] Translated into English as *The Land of Hunger* (Camporesi 1994).
[61] Translated into English as *Bread of Dreams: Food and Fantasy in Early Modern Europe* (Camporesi 1996).
[62] Rhodie (1995: 149) notes how *La ricotta* contains elements of carnival such as 'derision, orgy, excess, blasphemy, reversal of the normal, parody, the sacred paradox'.

certain 'pessimism', a kind of 'Sicilianity', often claimed by Sicilian artists and intellectuals and by Ciprì and Maresco themselves, who see their *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* as a reflection on Sicilian culture and a homage to the work of Luigi Pirandello. The aim is to identify links between *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* and the work of Pirandello, attempting to establish which elements of the film can be ascribed to the influence of Pirandello and relevant to the discussion on Sicilianity. The investigation draws on studies of Pirandello (Sciascia 2001; De Castris 1986), including film adaptations of his work (Micheli 1989: 10).

In section 3.2, 'Mafia and Religion', we will look at how Ciprì and Maresco's Palermo recalls an autarchic world where the concept of state does not exist and the lives of the men in *Lo zio di Brooklyn* and *Totò che visse due volte* seem to be regulated equally by cruel Mafiosi and by certain religious habits. In the former the Mafia becomes an implacable machine that avenges every misdemeanour and in the latter, religious sentiment takes the form of a hybrid of Christianity and paganism, and coincides with an insistent fear of the hereafter. The discussion on the Mafia (Dickie 2007, Sciascia 1997) will be linked to the discussion on 'mourning' in contrast with 'light' which, according to Bufalino, are important aspects of Sicilian traditional culture (2001); it will also refer to the representation of the Mafia in films by Italian American directors (Gardaphe 2003).

Section 3.3, 'Dialect versus Italian', focuses on how dialects have always constituted a 'problem' in Italian cinema, where linguistic connotations have often been reduced to mere conventions (the Sicilian dialect almost exclusively used in Italian cinema is that of Catania, notwithstanding that the majority of the films are set in Palermo). Ciprì and Maresco's *Totò che visse due volte* was one of the first films to set the trend for subtitling Southern dialects into Italian. Dialect predominates in the film and relegates Italian to the language of the Other, at the same time mocking and

ridiculing it. Dialect, on the other hand, strongly connotes this all-male world and is deployed with all its idiosyncrasies and idiomatic expressions throughout the film. This part will be based on a comparative analysis of the use of subtitles for Ciprì and Maresco's *Totò che visse due volte* and *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* and Alessandro Piva's *LaCapaGira / My Head is Spinning* (2000), a film set in another Southern region, Puglia, that reveals many points of difference with Ciprì and Maresco. The analysis will afford the opportunity to extend the discussion to the linguistic identity of the Italian South in contemporary Italian cinema with reference to other directors. The discussion on dialects considers works by Martin Maiden and Mair Parry (2014) and Tullio De Mauro (2011), while the discussion on translation draws on Umberto Eco's notion of translation as mediation, focusing on how translation is always a case of compromise (Eco 2004), and Lawrence Venuti's notion of 'foreignisation', highlighting how subtitles are used to intentionally disrupt the linguistic expectations of the target language audience in order to mark the otherness of the original text (Venuti 2008).

Chapter 1

Cityscapes

Chapter 1 examines the representation of urban space in Ciprì and Maresco's three feature-length films *Lo zio di Brooklyn / The Uncle from Brooklyn* (1995), *Totò che visse due volte / Totò Who Lived Twice* (1998) and *Il ritorno di Cagliostro / The Return of Cagliostro* (2003) with references to Ciprì and Maresco's work on video. The first section discusses the role of the 'road' in the city-text and the second and third sections focus on the two features that visually most characterise Ciprì and Maresco's Palermo: 'rubble' and the 'sprawling city'. While in the first section the emphasis is on the narrative elements of the 'city-text', seen as a 'product of countless and intermingled instances of representation' (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2003: 2), in the other two sections attention is centred on how the city-text reflects or distances itself from the 'real city', the one '(semi) permanently sited and described by its map' (ibid: 2), which in Ciprì and Maresco's cinema is subject to continuous manipulation.

Ciprì and Maresco's *œuvre* will be placed in the context of Italian cinema and analysed taking into account issues such as the impact of the Second World War bombings and illegal building in Italy. The aim is to demonstrate how their films, which deconstruct traditional representations of Palermo, contribute to the creation of a provocative city-text that goes beyond the stereotypical representation of a Mafia-ridden urban jungle and takes into account important urban, cultural and social aspects of the city.

1.1 The Road

The particular sensitivity to time and space that shapes Ciprì and Maresco's city-text is explored in the first part of this section, concentrating on how time is indeterminate, real spaces are transformed, and the representation of people and places is a mixed concatenation of minutely observed real-life situations and quotations from other texts. Aspects of this, like a certain kind of *flânerie* and the circular nature of the road in the narrative, are examined applying Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of 'chronotope' (2006), which conveys the inseparability of spatiality and temporality in a text and looks at how both concepts are constructed and conventionalised by different genres and authors.

1.1.1 The creation of a world

In *From Moscow To Madrid: European Cities, Postmodern Cinema* (2003), Ewa Mazierska and Laura Rascaroli provide a definition, 'lived' city, for the city seen in relation to 'the experience of urban life and of its representation that an inhabitant or a visitor may have' (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2003: 2). I will provide an insight into the lived city of Palermo in the late 1980s and in the 1990s for the purposes of comparative analysis with the fictional city-text representation of Palermo, making reference to the dominant types of film representation of Palermo in those years.

The most important Southern Italian city after Naples, Palermo has been dramatically affected by urban and cultural changes in Italy since the Second World War. From the 1970s onwards it has become the most rigidly stereotyped city in Italian cinema, rarely portrayed as anything other than the Mafia City. This stereotyping was a result of the common trend for using current events as the inspiration for film narratives, and what was happening in Sicily and Palermo was of

particular appeal. In July 1985, Leoluca Orlando became mayor of Palermo. Constantly under police protection, he contributed to a period of transformation known as the 'Palermo Spring'. During the years of his mandate, which lasted until the end of the 1990s, new anti-Mafia elements in the city emerged: 'University students organized protests in favour of the magistrates, the local Jesuits tried to push the Catholic hierarchy into greater activity against the Mafia, the association of civil society began to assume a mass character in the city for the first time' (Ginsborg 2001: 209). Together with the battle against the Mafia, another important matter that characterised Orlando's work was the reconstruction of the city.

It was in 1988 that reconstruction began to be considered and a building regulation plan was drawn up. This plan was based on 'quality' rather than 'quantity' and focused on the conservation of the old town, in contrast to previous trends that had allowed an indiscriminate expansion towards the outskirts (Rossi-Doria 1996). This unregulated development started immediately after the War, eventually destroying the Conca d'oro area surrounding Palermo.

Illegal building in Palermo is usually seen as a consequence of the influx of people into the town. When Sicily gained administrative independence in 1947, the number of public and administrative jobs in its capital town Palermo grew enormously with a consequential increase in a whole series of services and other jobs. This in turn attracted people from the countryside - and increasingly, in recent years, from outside Europe - to the city to work, causing the population to double in the period from the end of the Second World War to the 1980s (Cancila 1988: 485).

In reality, the phenomenon must also be explained by building speculation, which severely affected many cities across Italy after the war. Ginsborg (1990: 246) points out that in the 1950s and in the 1960s building speculators were 'left with a free hand' and houses were built fast: 73,400 in 1950, 273,500 in 1957, 450,000 in

1964 (ibid). 'No provision was made for town planning, none for parks, landscaping or even adequate parking facilities. Often the *palazzi* [blocks of flats] were constructed without regard for building norms or safety regulations. The newspapers dutifully chronicled the doleful stories of whole families destroyed by collapsing apartment blocks, of hospitals built without anti-seismic foundations in earthquake zones' (ibid).

All these changes and developments in Palermo are ignored in films of the time, which mainly focus on the Mafia phenomenon, creating an image of Palermo as a Mafia-ridden hell.[63] Marco Risi's *Mery per sempre / Forever Mery* (1989)[64] and *Ragazzi fuori / Boys on the Outside* (1990)[65] are representative of this type of film. They present a Palermo of police car chases, blaring sirens and heroes, featuring an idealistic teacher from the North[66] and a boy who is in prison for having avenged the killing of his father by the Mafia. Actors from the streets are used principally to give local colour and the interiors of people's houses serve as a backdrop for the dark, violent, superficially gripping stories.[67]

This kind of cinema - which became known as 'neo-neorealism' and had a significant influence during the 1990s - aimed at appealing to young people and focused on topics of direct relevance to them such as the issue of military service, which was obligatory at that time. Indeed Risi's debut feature is called *Soldati. 365*

[63] With the consolidation of Palermo as the Mafia city, a flourishing industry in supplying film extras and production facilities developed, reputedly controlled by the Mafia, as revealed in Ciprì and Maresco's documentary *Enzo, domani a Palermo / Enzo, Tomorrow in Palermo* (1999).

[64] A teacher from Milan who moves to Palermo to work in a school for young offenders, tries to understand and motivate his students, encouraging them to stand up for their rights. Among them there is Mery, a drag queen, arrested for assault when defending himself.

[65] As a sequel to *Mery per sempre*, *Ragazzi fuori* continues the stories of the main characters in the first film, exploring the difficulties they face once they leave the school for young offenders.

[66] The North as 'civilised, honest and hard working' that defines itself in relation to the South seen as Other.

[67] Like that, in *Ragazzi fuori*, of a young prostitute who goes with two boys at once because 'that way' she says, 'it will be over sooner'.

all'alba / *Soldiers. 365 Days Before Discharge* (1987)[68] and became a model for subsequent neo-neorealist films. The same camaraderie-based formula, a tribute to the power of the group or rather the 'pack',[69] can be found in *Mery per sempre* where, instead of the barracks, we have a prison for young offenders and in Ricky Tognazzi's *La scorta* / *The Escort* (1992),[70] where this time the barracks is replaced with a police officers' headquarters.

Ciprì and Maresco oppose such a representation of Palermo, this aesthetic of verisimilitude that seems to characterise much contemporary Italian cinema and implies that the inner truths of people and society are transparent and easily accessible. They present, instead, a city-text that subtracts those aspects most associated with the city, creating an inverted world where the traffic and chaos of today's Palermo is replaced by a desolate and empty city inhabited only by underdogs [Figure 1].

Figure 1: Immobile bodies in a desolate cityscape

[68] The film tells the story of group of young men serving their year of compulsory military service in a barracks. The film was made after several reports were released of young men committing suicide during their military service and focuses on the harshness that these young men faced.
[69] *Il branco* ('The Pack') was the actual title of a film made by Risi in 1994.
[70] The film was inspired by the life that police bodyguards faced in those years and in particular the close bond that they developed with the people they were protecting.

This representation of Palermo applies mainly to *Lo zio di Brooklyn* and *Totò che visse due volte,* while in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro,* which is mostly shot in studio, Palermo is hidden, recognisable principally for the use of its dialect.[71] In *Lo zio* and *Totò,* Palermo is represented by subtractions and abstractions, with the old town and the extreme outskirts combined together, leaving out the XIX century city, usually considered the real Palermo by its inhabitants. Palermo is also emptied of signs and landmarks, deprived of marks of modernity. *Lo zio* includes some of the main features that characterised Ciprì and Maresco's first videos: short sketches in black and white set in Palermo, played by an all-male cast of non-professional actors and depicting people on the margins of society who speak in the local dialect. The cinematographic format, however, allows the two filmmakers to develop particular themes and characterisations and to go beyond the limitations of the sketch format. The video *Illuminati* (1990) (literally, 'The Enlightened') features a deserted city and is possibly the directors' first attempt at eliminating references to a specific time (Morreale 2003: 84). The plot itself seems to presage situations and ambiences typical of their feature-length films: we see a paraplegic abandoned at a deserted cross-roads found by a group of vagabonds who don't know what to do with him, then we see the screen becoming bright and the vagabonds 'enlightened' strangle the paraplegic.

Lo zio di Brooklyn is inhabited only by men and men dressed up as women. The wide shots normally show sprawling areas with ugly modern buildings, while the interiors show the inside of decrepit old buildings resembling those of the old town. There are no cars, no signs of public places, no television, and although the characters could be present day, they sing 1940s and 1960s songs, while the way they act and speak is reminiscent of the early post-war years in Italy. The film focuses on the

[71] There is however, as we will see in 3.1, an insight in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* into the 'lived city', albeit a particular one, as the 'real people' interviewed form part of a mock-documentary.

Gemelli family: Tano, the father, three sons and a paralysed grandchild. Tano dies choking on a chicken bone, and on the way back from his funeral the family meets two dwarf Mafia bosses who ask them to hide a mysterious character of shady origins: the 'uncle from Brooklyn'. The family agrees to help the Mafia bosses and take in the old man, who neither eats nor talks. The film then follows other stories: the story of Giovanni, a failed singer who is convinced that his mother's negative influence has prevented him from becoming successful, and the story of Don Masino, a Mafia boss in pursuit of a vendetta for the disappearance of members of his family. The film leaves each situation largely unresolved and concludes with a 'dance of the resurrection of the flesh'. These stories create a world where surreal characters and situations are intertwined and transform Palermo into an open-air theatre. This recalls Samuel Beckett's theatre: featuring stories without apparent meaning; action and dialogue often reduced to a minimum and characterised by long pauses; aged people who ask useless questions and live in a state of tragicomic misery, in a context where bits and pieces of daily life are pulled apart and put together again.

Totò che visse due volte is, to some extent, a continuation of *Lo zio di Brooklyn*. The first scene is set in a half-empty cinema that is showing *Lo zio di Brooklyn* and where characters from the film itself are among the spectators.[72] *Totò che visse due volte* consists of three loosely linked episodes. The first tells the story of Paletta who, in order be able to pay for a prostitute, steals from a sacred shrine, unaware that the items he has stolen include a medallion placed there by a Mafia boss. The second episode centres on the middle-aged homosexual lovers Pitrinu and Fefè, whose troubled love story is told in flashback during the wake for Pitrinu's death. The

[72] The film recalls, and at the same time parodies, Pasolini's debut film *Accattone* (1961), set in the poor outskirts of Rome. As in Pasolini's *Accattone*, Bach's *St Matthew's Passion* is used to connote sacredness in a world of misery, and contrasts with the minimalist ambience in the first film, where music is used only at a diegetic level: the music of a small band playing at funerals and religious festivals that becomes part of the narrative and provides most of the music in the film.

final episode follows the story of an aged and irascible Christ-like figure, Totò, and a cruel Mafia boss with the same name and played by the same actor.[73]

Referring to these two films, Bruno Fornara writes that the world they create is based on four essential elements: 'earth, man, sky and gods' (Fornara 1999a: 3). Since 'man' in this instance does not stand for humankind but for the male sex, it can be argued that this world is based on an absence, the absence of women who are longed for and incessantly sought after (the few female characters in the films are played by men dressed as women).[74] These men live very basic lives based on a staple diet of sex and food and approach both in the same way, voraciously and frantically. It is an animal-like existence, and animals inhabit this world either in competition with men or subjugated to men's sexual needs. Then there is the sky, with its clouds moving swiftly overhead and thunderclaps that beat the earth like a warning from the gods, abruptly silencing the men's fearful laughter. But even in this Palermo Christ arrives, presented in the guise of an irascible old man, and new saints are chosen; Saint Rosalia, a saint who worked her miracles after death, gives way to Saint Polyphemus, a living saint with a glass eye.

This world is present in part in Ciprì and Maresco's third film, *Il ritorno di Cagliostro*. In this film, professional actors are used alongside the non-professional actors of the first two films. However, the non-professional actors are given more 'traditional' roles (e.g. a cardinal, some aristocrats and people in the film industry), producing hilarious sketches, the effectiveness of which derives, in part, from the gap between the characters with whom these actors are associated in the other films and these new 'upper class' roles. The film is a reflection on cinema and using the mock-

[73] The latter episode, with its surreal elements associated with the character of Totò/Christ, reminds us of the finale of *Lo zio di Brooklyn*, where the surreal component is provided by the resurrection of the flesh. This consolidates a certain symmetry in the narrative of both films and leads us to see them as a whole, although some important differences in the characteristics of the cityscapes remain, as we will see in the second and third parts of this chapter.

[74] See chapter 2.2.

documentary[75] genre pretends to go back to the discovery of forgotten films shot in the early post-war years in Palermo.

Il ritorno di Cagliostro revolves around the activities of the La Marca brothers, a pair of would-be film producers in late 1940s Sicily who set up a film production company, Trinacria Cinematografica, seeking to make Palermo a centre of film production to rival Rome. After various flops, they attempt to make an Italian-American XVIII century historical drama bankrolled by the Church and the Mafia and starring a burnt-out Hollywood movie star called Errol Douglas.[76] The film follows the trials and tribulations of the never-completed production, intercutting this with modern day interviews and reminiscences from cast members and the production team.

1.1.2 The road in Italian cinema

Lo zio di Brooklyn and *Totò che visse due volte* can be regarded as belonging to the Italian road movie genre. The Italian road movie as a genre has been defined and accepted only recently as a result of the interest generated by the American road movie.[77] I shall refer here to Laura Rascaroli's work, and in particular her 'New Voyages to Italy: Postmodern Travellers and the Italian Road Film' (2003).

The road movie has come to be seen as synonymous with American culture and is considered to be mostly an American film genre with a specific format and typified by films like Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) and Dennis Hopper's *Easy Rider* (1969). These films explore the myth of the open road with the dreams and anxieties that the road symbolises in a nation of vast distances and an open

[75] See chapter 3.1.
[76] Played by Robert Englund.
[77] Studies on the American road movie, while prolific in recent years, only really started to take off in 1997 following the publication of the seminal *Road Movie Book* edited by Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark.

landscape. In the Italian context films like Roberto Rossellini's *Viaggio in Italia / Voyage to Italy* (1954), Federico Fellini's *La strada / The Road* (1954) and Michelangelo Antonioni's *L'avventura / The Adventure* (1959) show that Italian cinema can also claim its own form of the genre, which has developed in different directions to the American forms.

A difference usually noted between Hollywood and European cinema is that the American road movie, despite a variety of film styles, maintains the role of the journey as 'cultural critique, as exploration both of society and of one's self' (Laederman, quoted in Rascaroli 2003: 73). This definition of the genre, however, also applies well to European road movies, 'and in fact the main similarity between European and American travel films is that the directors on both continents use the motif of the journey as a vehicle for investigating metaphysical questions of the meaning and purpose of life' (Rascaroli 2003: 73).

What most seems to differentiate American and European road movies is the contrast between the sense of freedom associated with the North American open spaces and never-ending highways and the European reality 'of a mosaic of nations, cultures, languages, and roads, which are separated by geographical, political, and economic boundaries and customs' (ibid: 73). Rascaroli points out how recent decades in particular mobility has become the norm for large groups of European citizens:

> Mobility has ceased to be the exception to the rule, and has itself become the rule. This phenomenon is the result of a set of social, economic, and political transformations that have taken place in the last twenty to thirty years […] These events include: the fall of Communism, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and of the Eastern European bloc, and the decay of totalizing ideologies; the advent of post-Fordism, the growth of *dis*organized capitalism and of globalization; the strengthening of the European Union, which has encouraged in a contradictory fashion both the shedding of national identities and the encouragement of transnational identification, *and*, at the same time, the strengthening of feelings of regional and local belonging (Rascaroli 2003: 74).

Inspired by Zygmunt Bauman's work (1996), Rascaroli looks at three figures of mobility as symbols of postmodernity in her discussion on the road movie in contemporary Italian cinema: the stroller, the tourist, and the vagabond. The stroller is the postmodern version of the *flâneur* who characterised early modernity. The tourist is looking for something new and bizarre that does not however tie him/her down (i.e. s/he remains free to return home). 'The vagabond instead has no home whatsoever, and is condemned to eternal movement' (ibid: 75). Rascaroli discusses above all the figures of the stroller and the vagabond in contemporary Italian cinema, highlighting its origins in neorealism. She notes that the film that initiated neorealism, Luchino Visconti's *Ossessione / Obsession* (1943), 'opens with a truck driving through the plain of the Po River, and ends with a desperate car escape', and its protagonist, Gino, 'is a tramp who is constantly on the move and who is tragically divided between his conflicting desires on the one hand to keep travelling (and thus maintain his freedom from mainstream Fascist society), and on the other to settle down with Giovanna' (ibid: 76).

It is since neorealism that the road has assumed a central role in many Italian films. One of the aims of neorealism in fact was to open up the field of vision, to show the rubble-strewn roads of the immediate post-war years and to record aspects of ordinary everyday life in urban and rural Italy. Films such as Rossellini's *Paisà* (1946) and De Sica's *Ladri di biciclette / Bicycle Thieves* (1948) show how the road determines the narrative. The former is a film constructed in episodes, telling the story of a journey through Italy from South to North in the final stages of the War, while the latter is an urban journey through Rome that uses the narrative pretext of the search for a stolen bicycle to reveal the harshness of life in the immediate post-war period. The most emblematic episode in Rossellini's film is the one set in Naples,

where the noisy dusty roads and continuous movement of cars and stolen black market goods symbolise the precariousness and confusion of life. *Ladri di biciclette,* instead, uses the road as a way of exploring the stark contrasts of the city of Rome, depicting the city as both vibrant and threatening.

Gianni Amelio created a road movie inspired by neorealism with *Il ladro di bambini / Stolen Children* (1992), depicting a journey into contemporary Italy that, reversing *Paisà,* travels from North to South. It tells the story of two children escorted by a *carabiniere* to a foster home in Milan but when the foster home will not accept the children, the *carabiniere* decides to take them South to a foster home in Sicily. While in the years of neorealism it still 'made sense to struggle in order to find a sense of identity, in today's Italy this goal is not achievable and becomes meaningless: the only way to survive is to keep one's options open' (ibid: 80). Amelio's main characters become therefore 'a reading of contemporary Italy as a homogenized land, a desert toured by postmodern vagabonds and tourists' (ibid: 80). Another important element of the film is the representation of the spread of illegally constructed buildings in the years following the economic miracle, which constitutes the landscape of *Il ladro di bambini* and it is seen by Rascaroli as 'a powerful symbol of the changed realities of the country, of the loss of values and traditions, both moral and aesthetic' (ibid: 82).

Like *Ladri di biciclette,* 'In Vespa', the first episode of Nanni Moretti's *Caro diario / Dear Diary* (1993), is an urban journey through Rome without a formal narrative and simply follows the protagonist's journey through the city. *Caro diario* includes two further episodes 'Isole' and 'Medici' that, together with 'In Vespa', correspond to three chapters of a diary that Moretti is shown writing in the film. It is this quality of movement that makes *Caro diario* a road movie inspired by neorealism. In the first episode, Moretti rides his Vespa around the streets of Rome,

deserted because of the summer holidays, looking at houses, commenting on dancing, cinema and the world he sees around him. The second episode is based on the protagonist's trip to the Aeolian Islands where he looks for a peaceful place to work. The last part shows Moretti visiting various doctors in search of the right cure for his itch. While the whole film can be seen in terms of movement, the first episode, 'In Vespa', is Moretti's most original contribution to the genre.

In 'In Vespa', the protagonist's ride through Rome is 'not a journey proper, as there is no departure (the filmmaker is first seen when already in motion) and no true destination. Furthermore, there is nothing essential to be learnt from the journey, only a lengthy list to be drawn of pleasant things to do […] the relationship with the city is so positive and pleasurable that it makes us think of modern *flânerie*' (ibid: 89).

The analysis of these two films reveals that Italian road movies look back at the lesson of neorealism showing the national space as 'a postmodern desert in which settled places are gone; a homogenized landscape in which the same myths, sounds and words are to be found and heard everywhere, and whose inhabitants are in constant motion', having become nomads, vagabonds, and tourists, unable or unwilling to fix their identity (ibid: 90). These films also recall neorealism's preference for the underdog and the struggle to survive. But, unlike the characters of neorealism, there is nothing heroic about their suffering: 'On the road, the characters lose themselves, are defeated' (ibid: 91).

1.1.3 The chronotope of the road

This excursus on the road movie in Italian cinema provides an introduction to a genre that is of relevance to Ciprì and Maresco's films. An impressive number of films that belong to a variety of other genres besides neorealism can be included within the genre of the road movie. This genre is also a useful reference point in the analysis I

will propose of Bakhtin's notion of 'chronotope'. In fact Bakhtin based his notion of chronotope in his 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel' (2006) on the study of different genres from classic to modern literature.

Bakhtin's study on the chronotope is based on a deep knowledge of literary genres and on a capacity to observe how these genres have brought to life certain conventions that reflect the society and times in which they developed. This leads to the conclusion that a text cannot be studied in isolation but must be seen as the fruit of other texts or genres or an intermingling of several genres. It is only by starting with the genre that one can arrive at the single work. The absoluteness of the text does not therefore exist in its Romantic conception as a work distinctive to and exclusive to its author.

Bakhtin defines chronotope (literally 'time-space') as 'the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature' (Bakhtin 2006: 84), which could be interpreted as an 'artistic imaging of human life concretely embodied within a specific object' (Morris 1994: 18). The chronotope becomes a unit of analysis for studying texts according to the ratio and nature of temporal and spatial categories, aiming to read 'texts as x-rays of the forces at work in the culture system from which they spring' (Bakhtin 2006: 425-426). More specifically, the notion developed by Bakhtin refers to the ways in which narrative genres move the scene of action from place to place and how different historical epochs conventionalise these movements in specific story patterns.

Bakhtin applied his notion of chronotope to the novel and did not make reference to cinema. However, as has been demonstrated by Robert Stam (1992), Bakhtin's ideas suit cinema as a medium where 'spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out concrete whole' (Stam 1992: 11). According to Stam, Bakhtin's description of the novel as the place where time 'thickens, takes on

flesh, becomes artistically visible', and where 'space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot, history', seem even more appropriate to film than to literature, 'for whereas literature plays itself out within a virtual, lexical space, the cinematic chronotope is quite literal, splayed out concretely across a screen with specific dimensions and unfolding in literal time (usually 24 frames a second), quite apart from the fictive time/space specific films might construct' (ibid).

In the application of Bakhtin's concept of chronotope, it is important to bear in mind that Bakhtin applies his concept to different textual strategies. In most cases the chronotope becomes a generic convention, but on other occasions chronotopes are seen at the level of semantic units that coincide with motifs; Bakhtin mentions the motif of 'the meeting on the road' where 'time, as it were, fuses together with space' (Bakhtin 2006: 243). As Martin Flanagan (2009: 53) says, Bakhtin's use of the term in 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel' can suggest three apparently distinct meanings:

> It can represent both dominant generic forms (classified according to methods of representing time and space - for example, the 'adventure chronotope' common to the second to sixth century Greek Romance) and more localized renderings of time and space within the textual field of reference (e.g. the road, or the threshold in Dostoevsky). In the 'Concluding Remarks' section Bakhtin seems to realize that the theoretical basis of the chronotope needs further clarification. Here, he 'fleshes out' his idea, defining chronotopes as 'the organizing centers for the fundamental narrative events of the novel ... the place where the knots of the narrative are tied and untied. (ibid)

The latter is the definition of chronotope that I will apply here, given that it highlights the important function chronotope has in a narrative. Among the chronotopes classified by Bakhtin, the chronotope of the road is the most relevant to the discussion on Ciprì and Maresco's cityscapes, due to the central role played by the road in the narrative of *Lo zio di Brooklyn* and *Totò che visse due volte*, both in its function of

moving the story along and in defining the relationships and characteristics of the various characters.

In *Lo zio di Brooklyn* the key moments in which the chronotope of the road is relevant are as follows:

- The road sees a continuous coming and going of people, of funeral cortèges and religious processions (the key foci of social life).
- It is on the road that the Gemelli family meet the dwarf bosses who ask them to hide the old man.
- It is on the road that the old man is found after he disappears.
- It is on the road that Giovanni, the singer, meets Zoras, the magician, and asks for his help to become a star and to resist his mother's negative influence.
- It is on the road that we see the character of the cyclist, first with his bicycle and then on foot when his bicycle is stolen from him.
- It is in the middle of the road that the character of the Sad Man is situated, so immobile that he becomes part of the cityscape.

As far as *Totò che visse due volte* is concerned, the following are the key moments in which the chronotope of the road is relevant:

- The penniless Paletta is always on the road, continuously mocked and subjected to cruel jokes.
- It is on the road that Paletta learns about the arrival of a prostitute in town (an event that will be the cause of all his troubles).
- Pitrinu and Fefè's love story takes place on the road (even if the narrative here plays on the contrasts between outside/inside, light/dark, which also symbolise Pitrinu and Fefè's thwarted and furtive relationship).
- The whole episode of Totò/Christ and his double Totò/Mafioso takes place on the road. We see Totò/Christ being hounded by a hunchback dwarf called Judas who insistently asks Totò for a miracle, as well as by other characters such as a blind man and the relatives of Lazarus who want Totò/Christ to resurrect him from the acid bath into which Totò/Mafioso has thrown him.
- We always see the Angel on the road, the character of the 'Idiot' in frantic search of sex, as well as Lazarus who, resurrected, runs desperately around in search of vengeance.

With reference to the discussion of the chronotope of the road in *Lo zio di Brooklyn* and *Totò che visse due volte*, a comparison with the films mentioned in the earlier discussion on the road movie in Italian cinema provides a useful means of observing points of difference as well as certain similarities. The figure of the *flâneur* proposed by Bauman, which Rascaroli applies to the character of Moretti in the episode 'In Vespa' in *Caro diario*, is diametrically opposed, socially and culturally, to the characters in Ciprì and Maresco. There is however another type of *flânerie*, a typically 'rural' *flânerie* characteristic of peasant culture, which Ciprì and Maresco do represent. It is a kind of strolling in which the strollers seek out novelties either for themselves or to take back to others; a wandering driven by a sense of curiosity but also simply a solitary ramble around the village or the country roads. In other words the *flânerie* of many places in Italy where a certain peasant culture continues to survive, represented in its urban manifestation by Pasolini, especially in films like *Uccellacci e uccellini* / *Hawks and Sparrows* (1965), which has many elements in common with *Lo zio di Brooklyn*.

Just as the roaming protagonist of Moretti's 'In Vespa' addresses the spectator with various commentaries on different social and artistic topics, so too the cyclist in *Lo zio di Brooklyn* addresses the spectator, this time commenting on the difficulty of finding a woman. The cyclist, like the protagonist of 'In Vespa', appears from the outset in movement, without a point of departure or of arrival [Figure 5]. However, they differ not only in the nature of their commentaries but also in their relationships with other characters. The protagonist of 'In Vespa' is proud of being a minority who observes others rather than mixing with them and when he stops to dance he dances alone. The cyclist, in a city much more deserted than Moretti's Rome, is solitary, timid, in a world of his own. His relationships with others are characterised by politeness and unlike other characters in the film that like him are desperately seeking

a woman, he uses a polite form of speech in which Italian, albeit ungrammatical, takes precedence over dialect. As the only character to use a means of transport, the cyclist is distinct from the other characters also because of a certain decorum in his dress; his cyclist's jersey makes him stand out from the others who are badly or barely dressed. He moves with a kind of grace that reflects his speech, taking pleasure in his roaming about the city where he seems to move invisibly, unobserved even by those few people who are passing. It is only when his bicycle is stolen that his life joins with that of the others.

Figure 2: The character of the cyclist in *Lo zio di Brooklyn*

Iachino Gemelli in *Lo zio di Brooklyn* and Paletta in *Totò che visse due* volte, are also seen largely on the street, both without any form of occupation. The two characters remind us of characters in Pasolini's *Uccellacci e uccellini* and Rossellini's *Francesco giullare di Dio / Francesco Juggler of God* (AKA *Flowers of St Francis*) (1950). They are poor wretches constantly on the road, who go from one adventure to the next, one misfortune to the next, as in the picaresque tradition to which Bakhtin refers. This is, however, a type of character who is distant from the cyclist *flâneur* who, apart from the incident with the bicycle, observes and comments on the world he lives in but does not move the narrative on. In *Uccellacci e uccellini* we have a father

and son seeking their fortune, exploiters and exploited in their turn, while in *Francesco giullare di Dio,* a group of monks in their evangelising work run into brigands and other misadventures.

While Bakhtin says that the road in the picaresque novel is a 'particularly good place for random encounters' (Bakhtin 2006: 243), his definition of the road as a place where 'the spatial and temporal paths of the most varied people - representatives of all social classes, estates, religions, nationalities, ages – intersect at one spatial and temporal point' (ibid) does not fit the road in Ciprì and Maresco, since their characters are always the same and of the same social class. It does however fit Pasolini's Rome in *Uccellacci e uccellini*, which is an abstract city like Ciprì and Maresco's Palermo and shows different people from different classes meeting and interacting; and also Rossellini's *Francesco giullare di Dio*, where each change of place corresponds to a different human and cultural experience that often signifies for the monks a confrontation with a hostile world. In Ciprì and Maresco people meet accidentally but they are all part of the same enclosed social and spatial environment. Even though Palermo is a city of more than one million inhabitants, as a guide at the beginning of the film reminiscent of a similar character in Fellini's *Amarcord* (1973) informs us, they all appear to know each other.

In Ciprì and Maresco's world the roads are all the same; they constantly intersect and follow a circular rather than straight trajectory. A circular spatial movement is typical of urban journey films and characterises films that are otherwise very different to each other, for instance taxicab stories (Scorsese's *Taxi Driver*, 1975, Jarmush's *Night on Earth*, 1991) in which the main characters depart or leave from the same place. In Ciprì and Maresco this place is the home, which characters constantly leave and return to, exemplified in particular by Iachino and Paletta. It is interesting to note how in *Lo zio di Brooklyn* and *Totò che visse due volte* crossroads

are a structural device, a place where people meet accidentally. Although Ciprì and Maresco have completely eliminated traffic and we see almost no cars at all in their films, traffic life is recreated through various funeral cortèges and religious processions which intersect and by the Sad Man at the crossroads, immobile like a roundabout or a set of traffic lights.

The road in the novels studied by Bakhtin is by contrast straight, at least in the classic novels. Bakhtin above all sees the road as a metaphor for life, with the flow of time as 'its fundamental pivot' (Bakhtin 2006: 244). The road becomes an essential part of a metaphorical journey of initiation into maturity and adulthood, as in the picaresque novels, and one thinks above all of the anonymous *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554), the prototype of this genre constructed around different spaces, characters and situations encountered by the hero. In Ciprì and Maresco's Palermo, however, notwithstanding the various misadventures they suffer, nothing much seems to change in the lives of the characters. We are confronted with a world in which everything seems to have already happened, already reached its end. After the resurrection of the flesh in *Lo zio di Brooklyn*, we find Tano Gemelli, dead because of his voracity, intent again on eating his chicken. In *Totò che visse due volte*, the resurrected Lazarus goes back to killing as he did before he was thrown in the acid bath by the Mafiosi. [78]

According to Bakhtin the picaresque journey is 'through *familiar territory*' (Bakhtin 2006: 245)[79] without touching alien or exotic lands. Despite what one might expect, this is not applicable to Ciprì and Maresco's Palermo. Palermo is not identified in any distinct way, landmarks and signs are missing in a landscape of rubble and anonymous buildings located, one imagines, between the city and the outskirts: it could be anywhere. While Moretti's journey in 'In Vespa' is characterised

[78] See chapter 2.3.3.

by various sequences showing a mosaic city of many different facets, the journey of Ciprì and Maresco's characters takes place, by contrast, in an abstract and featureless city without confines. Theirs is a life that constantly repeats itself in slow dilated rhythms. It is not clear what time period we are in; it appears to be a future time though the habits and speech point more to the past. Filmic time seems to coincide with that of real life: we see characters crossing the screen, walking literally from one place to the other and inhabiting therefore what is conventionally defined as 'dead time' in the narrative, but also times in which nothing seems to happen and we see characters motionless in front of the camera.

This dilation of time renders the cityscape even more claustrophobic and the dull and deserted cityscape strewn with rubble dominates the narrative even more, becoming part of it. We see this in *Lo zio di Brooklyn* in particular, where the dilation of time is used more and the plotless nature of the film directs our attention to the cityscape. In *Totò che visse due volte*, on the other hand, open spaces are often contrasted with closed and defined spaces such as the acid bath and the graves, and more emphasis is put on the various events the characters are facing, with a noticeably faster pace than the previous film and with fewer pauses.[80]

This pessimistic vision reminds us of *Uccellacci e uccellini* but goes beyond the critical function that the landscape assumes in Pasolini, where the emphasis is on the transformation from rural to industrialised Italy, or in Amelio's *Il ladro di bambini* where the passage is from the industrial to the post-industrial. We find ourselves confronted with a world in which ruins, also present in *Uccellacci e uccellini*, and the sprawling city, which characterises both *Uccellacci e uccellini* and

[80] This is particularly true of the second and third episodes of *Totò che visse due volte*, since in the first, where Paletta steals the medallion to go with a prostitute, the emphasis is still on dead moments. We see Paletta crossing the screen and acting through mime reminiscent of silent movies and it is no coincidence that the character of Paletta, who never speaks in the film, is played by the same actor (Marcello Miranda) who interpreted the Sad Man in *Lo zio di Brooklyn*, where we see him mainly in the middle of a road, immobile and motionless.

more especially *Il ladro di bambini*, are prominently highlighted. While *Il ladro di bambini* or the episode 'In Vespa' follow classic narrative rhythms, Ciprì and Maresco subvert traditional conceptions of time through dilating it, creating a chronotope that recalls above all Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. A certain theatrical ambience seems indeed to characterise all of Ciprì and Maresco's films, especially *Lo zio di Brooklyn* and *Totò che visse due volte*, where characters are shot frontally and also at times look directly at the camera or address the viewer, as if their Palermo has been transformed into an open air stage.

It is interesting to note that a particular use of time and space also characterises Pasolini's *Uccellacci e uccellini* where, however, there is a predilection for acceleration of filmic time, reminiscent of slapstick. There is a scene in particular, in the story within the main story, in which the two monks who fight with some peasants are thrown into the air. This element of slapstick, which Pasolini also uses in *La ricotta* (1963) and in *I Racconti di Canterbury / The Canterbury Tales* (1972), is part of a joyful vision of life and a peasant past much mythologised by Pasolini. Pasolini himself changed his views about this myth in his later years[81] and in Ciprì and Maresco it survives only in part and in hybrid forms representing a world in which, as we shall see in the final part of this chapter, the traditional strict distinction between countryside and city, urban and rural, no longer seems to exist.

[81] See also chapter 2.3.3.

1.2 Rubble

Rubble from ruins of buildings bombed in the Second World War and rubble from unfinished or collapsed buildings, the residue of post-war Italy's construction speculation, is a constant feature in Ciprì and Maresco's cinematic cityscape. Although it is difficult at times to distinguish one from the other, the different kinds of rubble are filmed according to different aesthetic aims. Their interest in the War rubble responds to a curatorial intent, to the preservation of images of Palermo destined to disappear as a consequence of an ongoing and much criticised restructuring plan. The unfinished building rubble, on the other hand, symbolises urban degradation and serves as a denunciation of years of unscrupulous building practices and regulations.

Rubble from the War will be discussed in relation to the significance that ruins assume in the collective memory of Palermo and of the old town, which was most severely affected by the bombings. Reference will be made to neorealism, a prime focus of which were the ruins of the War, and to Pasolini who in most of his 1960s films condemned the destruction of the Italian landscape. The issue of the destruction of the past will be further developed in an analysis of the sequence of the 'rape of the angel' in *Totò che visse due volte* with reference to Walter Benjamin's Thesis IX of his 1941 'Theses on the Concept of History', where he proposes an interpretation of Paul Klee's painting *Angelus Novus* as an admonishment of the errors of History.

While the rape of the angel sequence forms the background to consideration of the effects of the war, the discussion on rubble from illegal building will be placed in the context of the changes to the landscape in post-war Italy. Both aspects will be explored through a comparison with Francesco Rosi's *Le mani sulla città / Hands Over the City* (1963). Reference will also be made to other Sicilian artists and

contemporary Italian filmmakers who have been inspired by Palermo's ruins and debris or by the changes brought about by building speculation.

1.2.1 Rubble and neorealism

Following Roosevelt and Churchill's decision to invade Sicily at the Casablanca Conference in January 1943, military action began in earnest with the intensified bombing of Sicilian cities by the US Air Corps in Spring 1943 (the British had bombed Sicily sporadically since late 1942). These bombing raids were officially intended to destroy vital communications routes and military installations but a key and undeclared part of their aim was to frighten the Italians into offering little resistance to the Allied troops when they arrived on the ground (Rocca 1999: 36-44).

Notwithstanding the common belief that the Americans treated the Italians better than the Germans treated them, based in part on the fact that the American army included soldiers of Italian descent, the bombing of Sicily seems to contradict this, given that on 9 May 1943 'in less than twenty minutes, the American bombing of Palermo killed 1,500 people' (Enia 2005a: 4). Bombing imprecisely from high altitudes, it would have been evident that significant civilian casualties were inevitable and churches and schools as well as military targets were destroyed. The city suffered extensive damage and its old quarters were reduced to rubble.

This was a time of great suffering in Sicily and in the South of Italy in general. In these areas there had been little involvement in the resistance movement against Fascism, which was mainly concentrated in the North, and Southern Italians were suddenly precipitated into the face of the enemy when, with the Sicily landings, they found the allied forces in their midst. Even now, hollow walls and devastated buildings strewn with rubble form part of the cityscape of Palermo's old town, paying witness to the bombings and their aftermath.

Like Palermo, other Italian cities were dramatically affected by the American bombings. Captured on film, these images of ruins became the first real landscape of Italian cinema. In 1941, Giuseppe De Santis, one of the fathers of neorealism with his seminal film *Riso amaro* / *Bitter Rice* (1949), set in the rice fields of the Po Valley, wrote that Italian cinema lacked a landscape and that it should be a central preoccupation of cinema to find 'an authenticity of gestures and climate of those elements that serve to recreate the world in which men live' (De Santis 1982: 43). He lamented the fact that in Italy there were no directors like Jean Renoir who, in films like *La Grande illusion* / *The Grand illusion* (1937) and *La Bête humaine* / *The Human Beast* (1938), succeeded in creating a landscape where every detail contributed to determine the characters' drama (ibid), while in Italy, by contrast, the fashion for picturesque sets prevailed. Significantly, De Santis concluded that in Italy documentary was still considered a form detached from cinema (ibid: 45), identifying a key element that was to shape neorealism's aesthetics.

The context described by De Santis explains why Visconti's *Ossessione* / *Obsession* (1943), seen by many as the first neorealist film, had such a strong impact thanks to the close relationship of the film's characters to their surroundings, where the picturesque Italian landscape was transformed into 'a stage for violent passions and burning sensuality' (Bondanella 2009: 29). *Ossessione* was one of the first films to represent the harshness of daily life in a working-class environment with characters dispersed in a desolate landscape that seems to reflect that harshness, in clear contrast with the image of the idyllic wealthy country promulgated by fascist propaganda.

This need for authenticity also characterises Rossellini's 'War Trilogy', which, alongside *Roma città aperta* / *Rome Open City* (1945), includes *Paisà* (1946) and *Germania anno zero* / *Germany Year Zero* (1947). *Roma città aperta* places the city at the centre of the narrative, recounting stories that focus on the different needs

and aspirations of the Italian poeple under the German occupation. Rome was bombed for the first time on 19 July 1943, when one thousand tons of bombs were released on railway targets, also hitting densely populated areas of the capital (Rocca 1999: 70). Then, on 13 August, soon after the Vatican and the British and American governments declared it 'città aperta', 'open city', which meant a city deprived of defences and military targets, the Americans released five hundred tons of bombs on the city causing more than 2,000 fatalities and the massive destruction of private dwellings (Franciolini 2008). Although *Roma città aperta* mainly focuses on the resistance against the Nazis, its cityscape inexorably shows the devastating effects of the allied bombings.

An uncompromising approach to representing the reality of the everyday struggle for survival is one of the core characteristics of neorealist cinema. The critical acclaim of neorealism can be attributed in large part to a documentary-like style and a certain awareness of the landscape that we also find in films of the same period not necessarily associated with neorealism, for example Monicelli and Steno's comedy *Guardie e ladri / Cops and Robbers* (1951), which focuses on Italy during the Marshall Plan years when American aid was implemented. The film opens with a scene at the Coliseum, the ruin *par excellence*, affirming the status of Rome as a city of ruins. It continues in a long sequence moving from the city to the countryside, following an American official in pursuit a man who had attempted to cheat him by selling him a false ancient coin, capturing at the same time images of the War ruins.[82]

Of all the neorealist directors, Rossellini is undoubtedly the one who paid most attention to the rubble left by the bombings. As in *Roma città aperta*, this rubble becomes an essential part of the landscape in *Paisà*, thanks also to a narrative where the various stories are often derived from their surroundings. In the episode set in

[82] See also chapter 2.3.1.

Naples a black soldier is distressed because a child has stolen his boots, but he then comes to understand the reality of the child's life when he sees that he lives in a cave with other people because the Allied bombing raids have destroyed his house and killed his parents.[83]

The preponderance of rubble that characterises the episode of *Paisà* set in Naples is used again with powerful impact in *Germania anno zero*. Rossellini shot the film amidst the debris of post-war Berlin with long tracking shots of bombed-out buildings (Bondanella 2009: 50). The film is a portrait of a country wracked with guilt and confusion, focusing on the daily fight for survival of twelve-year-old Edmund who wanders the city trying to help his family and find money or food on the streets. In this film Rossellini's camera 'is much more mobile than in other parts of the war trilogy, and its characteristic movement in the work is a long – almost obsessively long – tracking shot following Edmund through the rubble and debris of the desolate city landscape' (ibid: 51).

It is not only the particular use of the camera that imbues Rossellini's 'rubble' with a special significance; his whole approach to filmmaking was destined to have a major impact on the future of European cinema. Rossellini was not in fact the first to focus on the ruins of Berlin but rather Wolfgang Staudte with *Die Mörder sind unter uns / The Murderers are Among Us* (1946). Shot in the Soviet Zone of Occupation, Staudte's film initiated the so-called German 'rubble cinema'. It focuses on war-guilt and the guilt-by-association of wartime bystanders and follows a more traditional approach in its narrative, centred on the protagonists' tormented relationship.[84]

[83] Naples was among the cities subjected to the heaviest bombing, the worst of which was on 4 August 1943 when 400 aeroplanes of the Mediterranean Bomber Command released hundreds of bombs and then flew low over the city to shoot down the fleeing crowds with machine gun fire (Monda 2005: 11).
[84] In *The Murderers Are Among Us* Susanne, a survivor of the concentration camps, on her return to Berlin finds her apartment in ruins and occupied by a new tenant, a Dr Hans Mertens, who spends his time drinking in order to suppress his memories of the war. Dr Mertens refuses to move out and Susanne ends up sharing her apartment with him.

While *The Murderers are Among Us* follows the tradition of classic cinema, defined by Gilles Deleuze in terms of 'action-image' (Deleuze 1992a), *Germania anno zero* breaks with that tradition. According to Deleuze, prevalence of the time-image is an important aspect of post-war Western cinema. While in classic cinema prior to this period the movement-image prevails, constructing a chronological narrative, in time-image, on the other hand, time becomes more important than action and movement; time is fore-grounded and its sheer duration is felt. The action-image firstly shows a milieu that acts on the character and constitutes a situation in which he/she is caught, and then a character that reacts and responds to the situation, modifying his/her milieu or his/her relationship with it (Deleuze 1992a: 141). This definition perfectly describes *The Murderers are Among Us* story, while what characterises *Germania anno zero* most is its characters' feelings and anxieties, which a rather fragmented narrative does not always aim to solve. Rossellini's approach deploys, according to Deleuze, five apparent characteristics: the dispersive situation, the deliberately weak links, the voyage form, the consciousness of clichés and the condemnation of the plot (ibid: 210). These characteristics reflect the social and moral causes that put traditional cinema in crisis in post-war Europe: 'the war and its consequences, the unsteadiness of the American Dream in all its aspects, the new consciousness of minorities…' (ibid: 206).

The characteristics identified by Deleuze can be found in Ciprì and Maresco.[85] The indeterminate situations, the deliberately weak links, the awareness of clichés and the 'condemnation of the plot' are all characteristics that will be discussed in later chapters and are already evident in the analysis in part 1.1 on the 'voyage form'. As he searches through the rubble of Berlin, Edmund can be seen as the forerunner of the

[85] Kathryn St. Ours (2011), for instance, compares Pasolini and Ciprì and Maresco in their use of the 'time image' to reflect the difficulty or the impossibility of human agency in postmodern society.

characters in *Lo zio di Brooklyn* and *Totò che visse due volte*. In this respect *Germania anno zero* can also be included in the category within the road movie defined as 'urban journey', in which the circularity of Edmund's daily meanderings highlights still more the bleakness of the story and the harsh realities of the time.

Rossellini is present in Ciprì and Maresco via Pasolini. Pasolini did not just want to represent reality but 'aimed at putting spectators in the position of asking themselves questions about reality' (Viano 1993: X). Hence Ciprì and Maresco's style tends to steer away from the naturalism of neorealism. From the need for authenticity sought by Rossellini in *Germania anno zero* through the use of the mobile camera, we move in *Lo zio di Brooklyn* and *Totò che visse due volte* to a series of *tableaux* in which the ruins of the War assume the classical beauty of derelict remains with arches or dwellings without roofs shot from below.

1.2.2 The rape of the Angel

Ciprì and Maresco isolate the war ruins through a process of abstraction eliminating the modern city and see them as part of the collective memory of Palermo. In an interview Maresco says:

> We are connected with this city and we will never be able to loosen the ties with Palermo. It is a relationship that is at the heart of our work. But it is also a painful relationship. This is the city of my parents, of my grandparents, it has been handed down to me and I come from a culture made up of a certain kind of language and traditions. And in recent years, as I roam around the city and its outskirts going to see the places of my childhood I can see transformation, a city that is erasing its own memory. There used to be a reality of rubble, even rubble from 1943, which represented a past, painful and rich with associations, of other emotions: but this city is being wiped out and is becoming something without a form, shapeless. This is what we have observed and it signifies not only the erasure of a physical reality, houses, spaces that disappear but also the disappearance of a certain humanity. At one time there were distinct quarters, Borgovecchio, Cruillas, lo Sperone, quarters that were cities within the city, with their own nuances of dialect and habits. All this is disappearing and the older generation, the old ones who survive and who can no longer understand what is happening, are unable to adapt to the changes of the time. On the one hand you have a city that is modernising and becoming

> ‘European’; on the other you have the old people who are unable to adapt to the new. (Fofi 2008b)

This aim to preserve places of Palermo’s collective memory emerges in particular in *Lo zio di Brooklyn*, *Totò che visse due volte* and in the medium-length film *A memoria / In Memory* (1996). In *A memoria*, for instance, we witness a series of scenes held together by the loose narrative thread of the search for the glass eye stolen from a living saint, which becomes the pretext for showing not only the ruins of Palermo but also other important places of memory such as the villages of the Belice Valley, not far from Palermo, hit by the earthquake of 1968, and an abandoned chimney representing a working-class past[86] that in the film seems ever more distant [Figure 3].

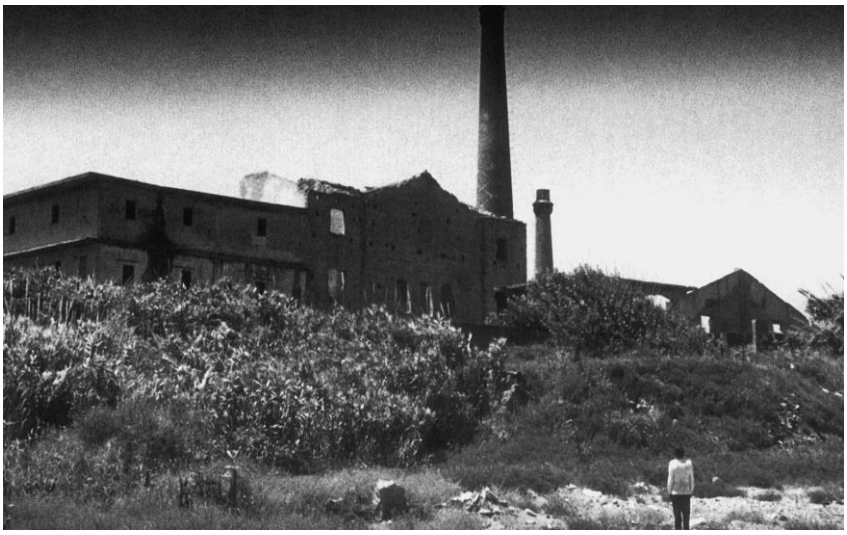

Figure 3: The abandoned chimney in *A memoria*

As in *Lo zio di Brooklyn* and in *Totò che visse due volte*, in *A memoria* there is a dilation of time that, combined with the fragmented storyline, makes the landscape itself central to the narrative. What is most striking about *A memoria* is how the ruins of the earthquake become one with the ruins of Palermo and memories of the

[86] After the War, as in other Southern Italian cities, industrialisation became a priority in Palermo, but despite massive investment it did not succeed and in its wake left people unemployed and buildings that disfigured the cityscape (see chapter 1.1.1).

earthquake of 1968, which caused the death of 300 people and destroyed whole areas, become mingled with those of the War. The message may seem to be that history repeats itself but Ciprì and Maresco's vision goes beyond what might be defined as fatalistic and becomes instead a profound pessimism without any glimpse of hope.

The admonishment from History in Walter Benjamin's interpretation of Klee's *Angelus Novus* is paralleled in the rape of the Angel sequence in *Totò che visse due volte*, suggesting that humanity has irrevocably reached its end. Having left Nazi Germany for France in 1939, in 1940 Benjamin wrote a series of meditations in the form of eighteen 'Theses on the Concept of History' (1940). Thesis IX is an invitation to rethink our relationship with History, to reconsider, in the present, those possibilities not fulfilled in the past. It proclaims the end of the concept of history as a linear process, moving optimistically into the future. In Thesis IX, Benjamin writes:

> A Klee painting named 'Angelus Novus' shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such a violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. (Spencer n.d.) [Figure 4]

Figure 4: Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus* (1920)

This interpretation - which sees the angel of History turned of necessity towards the past, precisely because to create the future we must take possession of the past - is of particular relevance to Ciprì and Maresco's vision of history. Though based on his own very personal interpretation of Klee's painting, it acts as a powerful image of the fear that the individual human being experiences, having lost control of time in a modern world characterised by the continual succession of overwhelming and devastating events.[87] In the third episode of *Totò che visse due volte* the Angel, who has a symbolic rather than narrative function, is raped by massive men and an 'Idiot' who is forced to take part. Shot in wide angle, we first see the Angel moving to the centre of arched ruins, his hands held in prayer, singing the Neapolitan song *O bbene*

[87] Benjamin's interpretation may actually contradict what could have been Klee's original intention for this painting as some commentators have connected the Angelus Novus to the rise of Adolf Hitler. According to Carl Djerassi (2014), the Angelus Novus is now considered one of Klee's most famous works 'but by no means because of its artistic merits. Benjamin had purchased it in 1921, whereupon it was not seen until his death in 1940 by anyone but the occasional visitor to Benjamin's room.' The work was cared for by Bataille and then by Theodor W. Adorno, who kept it until his death in 1968, and finally by Gershom Scholem, who kept it until his death in 1982. It was only then, after its installation in the Israel Museum that the original was 'exposed to public scrutiny'. It is therefore thanks mainly to Benjamin's Thesis IX that the work was already known. Djerassi also comments that 'Benjamin's confusion of "debris" with Klee's then newly discovered oil transfer technique, which subsequently was used in dozens of works, none of which in any way related to debris, is only one mistake. Philosophically, what Benjamin wrote is perfectly acceptable, but artistically it borders on the risible'.

mio (‘My Beloved’), while three obese men stand still to the sides of the ruins [Figure 5]. All the characters are in front of the camera and seem to look into it. Then, in slow motion, the three men move and take the Angel, forcing him against a wall and raping him. At the same time the character of the ‘Idiot’ appears in the scene, masturbating, and is then forced to take part in the rape. The violence is heightened not only through the use of slow-motion and by the soundtrack of distorted fragments of the Angel’s song but also through emphasising the chromatic effect of the black and white film almost as if it were a negative, the white prevailing through various fades into total white, which breaks the scene up into shots of extreme close-ups.[88]

Figure 5: The rape of the Angel in *Totò che visse due volte*

The arches of the ruin, clearly that of an old house, and the distorted fragments of the Neapolitan song symbolise the remains of a world tied to painful memories and to a kind of humanity that emerged from that suffering and, as Maresco says, can no longer find its place in today’s world. It is no coincidence then that in their next film, *Il ritorno di Cagliostro*, those memories and Palermo itself are evoked rather than represented, signifying an irreparable divide between past and present. There is a sense of defeat in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* demonstrated by the fact that the strictly

[88] See also chapter 2.2.3.

location-based shooting of the first two films, with an emphasis on the architecture of ruins, has given way to a set constructed almost entirely of dark and lugubrious interiors. It is a vision confirmed by Maresco, as we have already seen. In an interview that he gave after the release of *Il ritorno di Cagliostro*, he adds: 'If you take a look around, you will see a city that is changing for the worse, with a series of restoration projects that are erasing the past from our walls and leaving in their place a sort of hardboard Cinecittà. My love for this city resides only in my memory' (Morreale 2003: 47).

Ruins and rubble also constitute an important element in the plays of Franco Scaldati,[89] certain elements of which, such as the use of dialect and the interest in people living on the margins of society, are also present in Ciprì and Maresco. *Il pozzo dei pazzi* (1976) ('The Well of Madmen'), Scaldati's best known work, opens with a scene of two vagabonds sleeping among rubble; *l'Assassina* (1985) ('The Murderess'), also set among rubble, is a play that aims to preserve the peasant culture of the past and confronts the spectre of an ever-present death which may strike at any moment. Here too, as in Ciprì and Maresco, the characters are bound on a circular trajectory and as one of the characters says: *...caminamu... caminamu... e semu unn'eram'a 'antura*, ... 'we keep on walking…and walking… and end up where we started' (Scaldati 1990: 22).

Even though he transforms events and avoids any specific historical references in his stories, Scaldati nonetheless manages to recreate the atmosphere of the years

[89] Franco Scaldati (1943-2013) is considered to be one of the most influential Italian playwrights. His influence on Ciprì and Maresco is also explained by his frequent collaborations with the two directors. Scaldati plays one of the La Marca brothers in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* and has taken part in some of Ciprì and Maresco's multimedia works like *Palermo e Santa Rosalia* in which extracts from his plays are presented together with images from Ciprì and Maresco's works on video. Maresco once said in an interview that Scaldati's play *Il pozzo dei pazzi* was a revelation for him and that if he had not known Scaldati he would, perhaps, never have considered becoming a filmmaker. According to Maresco, he and Ciprì have taken to extremes the grotesque element that can be found in Scaldati without, however, reaching the heights of lyricism that Scaldati achieved (Fusco 2015).

immediately following the Second World War bombings. In *Il pozzo dei pazzi* the memory of the Americans is still alive, through insults such as 'figlio di americani', 'son of an American', which makes reference to women who were raped by or forced to prostitute themselves with American soldiers. A cityscape made up essentially of ruins and rubble is created. In place of a house, the characters seek out the shelter of a wall for protection from the wind and rain (ibid: 23). The ruins assume an affective value and are inhabited as though they were a proper house: 'we'll set up the table and chairs and the bed… and when we have sorted out everything we need we'll go out and have fun' (ibid: 25).

The preservation of memory by Ciprì and Maresco can be explained as a reaction to the 'new', to the advance of 'progress' and its homogenising impact, but also as a way of recalling that the bombing of Palermo, more than other cities, has largely been forgotten. While images of those events in cities like Rome, Naples and Florence were fixed forever in neorealist cinema, unlike rural Sicily, Palermo was ignored by neorealism. It is difficult to find references to the War, to ruins, in the films set in Palermo after the War; even when the old town is featured, the ruins are often omitted.

One exception is Roberta Torre, who has worked very closely with Ciprì and Maresco. Their influence can be seen in her first two films *Tano da morire* / *To Die for Tano* (1997) and *Sud Side Story* (2000).[90] In her third film, *Angela* (2002),[91] Torre adopts a completely different style, a more realist approach which examines everyday life in Palermo through continuous tracking shots, dramatic contrast between blinding

[90] Two musicals that play on Mafia stereotypes.
[91] The film tells the passionate and tragic love story of a Mafia boss's wife who has a relationship with one of her husband's 'employees'.

light and darkness, employing images mostly of the old town with its derelict bombed-out buildings.

As far as theatre is concerned, aside from Scaldati, Davide Enia's *Maggio '43* ('May 1943') (2003) is of particular importance. In *Maggio '43,* Enia presents a collection of people's memories of the events of the War, building them around the narrative nucleus of a young man in a cemetery talking to his dead brother. The image of Palermo that emerges is of a frightened city that the day after the bombing of 9 May 1943 is unrecognisable, with no houses and no streets but only debris and a blanket of dust and smoke, people starving and without medical aid and the little that is available having to be bought on the black market at extortionate prices and at the risk of arrest.

Enia looks at the past both to preserve the collective memory of the city and in order hold up a mirror to the present. He links the barbarism of the War with that of today as if in reality the War had never ended in Palermo. As Enia says, 'They were atrocious times when death struck unexpectedly from above or from the underground of the black market, with its extortionate prices. They were evil times: sick, dishonest and cynical, similar to today' (Enia 2005b: 10-11).

1.2.3 Building speculation, from Rosi to Ciprì and Maresco

Enia's present day, in *Maggio '43*, is the time of the Mafia, which made some of its biggest profits from post-war building speculation. The spread of illegal building towards the countryside around Palermo was in fact controlled by the Mafia and led to the abandonment of the old town, a 'pile of rubble' destined to remain so for many years to come (Alongi 1998: 50). The phenomenon should also be seen in the context of the illegal building during the time of the 'Economic Miracle'. Paul Ginsborg comments:

> The thirty years between 1950 and 1980 saw a catastrophic change in the landscape and cityscape of the Italian peninsula. Many of the historic centres of the Italian cities and towns were modified irreversibly, and their suburbs grew as unplanned jungles of cement. Thousands of kilometres of coastline were ruined as hotels and second houses were constructed without any restraints upon their siting or their density. […] Urban Italy sprawled outwards, unchecked and unplanned. The new face of the peninsula was represented by the suburbs of Rome, Naples and Palermo, by the periphery of Milan […]. All this earned the Italians the reputation of being a nation both incapable of protecting its heritage, natural and man-made, and unable to govern its future. (Ginsborg 1990: 246)

The initiatives pursued in the 1990s by the mayor of Palermo Leoluca Orlando and his administration in response to this situation did not, however, produce the desired results and in general the work of conservation carried out in various Italian cities after this time has been based on fundamental misunderstandings. Investment in the outskirts has above all sought to provide better connections with the centre. Even in those cities that have given greater importance to the suburbs, providing essential amenities and establishing artistic and cultural activities, the suburbs have always been seen as dependent on the city. Few city councils have attempted to build instead a 'city of cities' as outlined, for instance, in the 1994 building plan for Palermo (Rossi-Doria 1996: 34).

As far as the work on the old town is concerned, Maresco's observation that what was produced resembled 'Cinecittà' (Fofi 2008b), meaning a kind of 'fake city' resembling the Rome-based film studios, sums up the approach taken. The work in fact focused on renovation rather than conservation, on transforming the old town and creating dwellings destined for high earners rather than for the original inhabitants. There was far too much emphasis on a nostalgic attempt to recreate the old town in its original form, erasing its history and the patina of age created by all the events that had marked its past and 'trying to forever seal the place to its past' (Schilleci 1998: 468-69). The recovery of memory, according to Lidia Decandia, means going beyond

static images and moving with the times, to look to the past as a source of ideas for the present while taking account of the actual needs of the present (Decandia 1998: 366-67); in substance to construct a new environment with the inhabitants who have always lived there in mind.

Whether Orlando was successful or not in his renovations of the old town has remained a topic of debate. What is undeniable is that after Orlando retired from office in 2000 there was a worrying upsurge in illegal building, which for a time had been halted. The regional election campaign of Totò Cuffaro, a member of Silvio Berlusconi's 'Forza Italia' party, which focused on the populist motto of 'doing what the people want', provides some insight into the reasons behind this reversion to old corrupt practices. In practical terms this led to the legalising of the hundreds of illegal constructions on which work had previously been stopped, involving the payment of a fine to the local administration in return for permission to complete the works.[92] As the journalist Giorgio Bocca said, 'you just need to look around you to see the effects: cement-bound coastlines, polluted streams and rivers, wasteland already turning to desert' (Bocca 2001: 14).

The desolate images that Bocca refers to are vividly represented in Ciprì and Maresco's films: *Lo zio di Brooklyn* opens on enormous run-down blocks of flats viewed from a distance and shown in a series of fixed shots; the desert-like images of the scene where the Mafia boss awaits his informers in *Lo zio di Brooklyn*; the landscape we see in *A memoria*; and where Lazarus calls out for vendetta in *Totò che visse due volte*.

[92] In substituting ethics with what the people want, who 'always want the State to give everything in return for as little as possible' (Bocca 2001: 14), Cuffaro even managed to get the State to fund the provision of the water supply and sewage facilities for these illegal buildings. It was a policy that supported illegality and contributed to making the already disastrous town-planning situation even worse.

These images are in contrast to the shots of ruins from the War, which, as we have noted, are usually represented in a series of *tableaux*. A significant difference is that while the ruins from the War are used as the backdrop to scenes with the characters - which, due to their pictorial treatment, seem to take on the air of historical ruins - the ruins from building speculation are shown one after the other in a kind of documentary reportage. The latter style of filming is used to express condemnation, and serves to highlight a destruction of the landscape that has reached catastrophic proportions.

A film that presents one of the most picturesque images of Sicily, Tornatore's *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso* / *Cinema Paradiso* (1988), refers to the ugliness of recent years in the sequence where the old cinema is symbolically demolished to make way for a car park. Very few films however have focused specifically on this issue. A notable exception is Marco Tullio Giordana's *I cento passi* / *100 Steps* (2000), a film that recounts the events related to the young activist Giuseppe Impastato's opposition to the Mafia and his murder by the Mafia on 9 May 1978.[93] Impastato focused attention on precisely what Ginsborg defines as the 'rape of the landscape' (Ginsborg 1990: 246). The film is based on events that occurred between the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s when land in one of the most beautiful sites in Sicily was taken from peasants in order to make way for further development of Punta Raisi airport, a project that had been assigned to a firm controlled by the Mafia.

One of the reasons that Italian cinema neglected these changes was that politicians in the 1950s started to become concerned about the negative image of Italy that neorealism with its images of post-war destruction, and depiction of the everyday life of poor or working class people, was projecting to the outside world (Brunetta 2006: 15). The Italian landscape therefore became the picture-postcard landscape that

[93] A research centre on the Mafia is dedicated to Impastato (http://www.centroimpastato.it/index.php3).

American and other foreign tourists associated with their holidays. From true neorealism there was a move to a neorealism 'rosa', rosy neorealism, a kind of neorealism that had lost its sense of commitment and adapted itself to the tastes of commercial cinema.

It was not until the 1960s that we can talk of a more engaged cinema again, even though Fellini's 1950s films nonetheless recorded the changes wrought by the Economic Miracle, with films like *Il bidone* / *The Swindlers* (1955) in which unscrupulous men, who symbolise the advance of the new political class, defraud people from the countryside, and especially *Le notti di Cabiria* / *Nights of Cabiria* (1956), written by Fellini in collaboration with Pasolini, which makes use of the dilapidated outskirts of Rome, a kind of crumbling shanty-town built without regulation, as a backdrop.

A film regarded as seminal on the subject is Francesco Rosi's *Le mani sulla città* / *Hands Over the City* (1963). Rosi stated that he tried with this film to overcome the strictures of a mannered neorealism: 'my aspiration with this film was for the story to emerge from reality, not to impose a story on reality. To my mind, the deformation created by mannered neorealism was the way in which a pre-fabricated story was pasted onto reality' (Conti 2004). Hence the militant character of the film; unchecked urban development resulting from building speculation is unsparingly analysed and this is evident from the aerial shots in the opening sequence and through long shot sequences throughout the film. It is a tautological film presenting the same images at the end, accompanied by a significant caption: 'the characters and facts represented here are fictional, but the social reality that produced them is all too real'. In this film a speculator ruthlessly shifts the balance of power in the council to his own advantage so as to bring the public building programme on to his own land, without regard to the suffering brought about by the collapse of a run down block of

flats in an area that needs redevelopment. The discussions, the panning shots of rubble and the images of the living conditions of the sub-proletariat within the old town and on the outskirts of Naples become the narrative of the film itself.

What Rosi saw at an advanced stage in the 1960s, becomes a completed process in Ciprì and Maresco. While in Rosi's film the community has an active role, rebels at or is at least conscious of the destruction being wrought around it, in Ciprì and Maresco we are faced with a *fait accompli* where no other reality any longer seems conceivable. Unlike in Rosi, there is no representation of the city of the rich in counter-position to that of the poor, nor the dichotomies that exist in Pasolini between the bourgeoisie and the sub-proletariat. There is only one class and one derelict landscape, a reduction to the lowest point, where building and 'human' rubble co-exist.

This world of suburbs, this succession of anonymous buildings, this lack of recognisable landmarks and signs can be seen as a recurrent feature in contemporary Italian cinema, which John Foot, in his analysis of the representation of Milan in Silvio Soldini's cinema, attributes to the effects of post-industrialisation in Italy (Foot 2015: 91-93). The indistinctiveness referred to by Foot can be placed in the context of the discussion on postmodernity, of a global culture imposed on local cultures, and above all the discussion on Italy's loss of national identity after the fall of the Berlin Wall (ibid); Ginsborg refers to them as 'Years of fragmentation' (Ginsborg 2001: X).

The indistinctiveness in Ciprì and Maresco is not tied to the typical 'signs' of postmodernity such as 'non-places' like supermarkets and airports, which are identical in every part of the world (Augé 2009). The architecture most often associated with postmodernity, such as ex-industrial complexes now used for other

purposes, is also lacking.[94] Ciprì and Maresco do not represent postmodernity, rather they sense its effects and attempt to preserve images of what remains of a whole culture. In the 1990s, the years of *Lo zio di Brooklyn* and *Totò che visse due volte*, postmodernity changed the face of Palermo where, unlike in other Italian cities, forms of peasant culture still remained. The importance of these transitional years is evident from the curatorial focus of Ciprì and Maresco's work, aimed at preserving images of ruins from the War, and the denouncement of the effects of building speculation. Paradoxically it is precisely elements that in themselves are indistinctive that ultimately form the landmarks of the city: ruins from the Second World War bombings, which are gradually disappearing, and rubble from building speculation, which never seems to end.

[94] Examples of these kinds of places, integral to many Italian cities' urban regeneration plans, including Palermo, can be seen in Martone's *Teatro di guerra / Rehearsal for War* (1998), a film set in Naples where the city's traditional landmarks are excluded and the story focuses on a theatre group rehearsing in an ex-industrial complex where concerts also take place (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2003: 68).

1.3 Sprawling City

Largely because of their accelerated transformation over a limited time period, the outskirts of Italian cities have become the most complex part of the city, the 'outer limits' *par excellence*. With the constant expansion of the city out towards the countryside, these limits have become increasingly shifting and undefined, leading ultimately to the so-called 'urbanised countryside' or 'sprawling city' that signals the breaking-down of boundaries, which were at one time 'distinct and inviolable, necessary in order for the urban and the rural to exist in relation to one another' (Cervellati 2000: 38).

In *Lo zio di Brooklyn* and *Totò che visse due volte*, ruins and rubble are scattered in the middle of the countryside, while anonymous blocks of flats are seen from a distance across a rural landscape. Palermo becomes a city where there is no centre or periphery, no beginning or end. It resembles Penthesilea, one of the imaginary cities of Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities* (1972). Penthesilea is symbolic of the so-called 'urban wasteland' of cities that lose themselves by moving outwards, through rampantly proliferating outskirts that tend not only to engulf spaces, but also to destroy the anthropological features of the city as a place. What differentiates Ciprì and Maresco's Palermo from Calvino's Penthesilea is the predominance of the rural over the urban. It is nevertheless a particular kind of rurality, which seems to be regulated by archaic rules and customs but is not in the least agricultural.

Taking into account the transformations that saw the passage of Italy from a rural to an industrial country, as well as historical, social and urban elements that have come to characterise Palermo today, we shall see how and to what extent such a representation reflects aspects of the real and 'lived' Palermo. The work of Pasolini will be a key point of reference for the discussion. Pasolini's views about the end of

peasant culture (Pasolini 1991: 152-158) are reflected in his 1966 film *Uccellacci e uccellini* / *Hawks and Sparrows*, a major influence on Ciprì and Maresco's first two films. The comparison between these three films and De Sica's *Miracolo a Milano* / *Miracle in Milan* (1951), which also focuses on the transformation of the outskirts into slums, provides the opportunity to compare different periods of post-war Italy. It will also help us to understand Ciprì and Maresco's perspective compared to other Italian directors who have also condemned changes in the urban environment arising from the crisis in the housing situation in the period immediately following the end of the Second World War.

This thesis constantly references Pasolini not only because of the many similarities Ciprì and Maresco share with Pasolini's work and ideas but also because Pasolini is fundamental to any discussion on post-war Italian life and environment. Monica Seger highlights how 'it is through film that he most directly engages the contemporary interstitial terrain between urban and rural, and between built and unbuilt environments. […] [Pasolini] asks viewers to question the lived realities in which we participate, realities that host changes to land as well as lifestyle' (Seger 2015: 50).

The discussion is placed in the context of ecocriticism, addressing the key questions of how nature is represented in a text and what role the physical setting plays in a text (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996: xviii). Ecocriticism deals with texts that represent nature in its modified aspects, 'land repeatedly built upon and ecosystems forever altered' (Seger 2015: 3). Monica Seger writes that for Italian cinema and literature this is not the norm, instead 'images of gently rolling hills with poppies and poplars swaying in the breeze and nary an industrial drainpipe in sight' (ibid) is what we are mostly presented with. Ecocriticism is also, according to Cheryll Glotfelty (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996: xx), a troubling awareness 'that we have reached the age

of environmental limits, a time when the consequences of human actions are damaging the planet's basic life support systems'; an awareness that, as we will see, is a key characteristic of Ciprì and Maresco's cinema.

1.3.1 A 'leprous' countryside

Calvino's *Invisible Cities* (1972), in which Marco Polo diverts the emperor with tales of cities that he has visited across the empire, is an often-quoted book with its compilation of urban images open to various readings. It is a book that can be read as a reflection on modern cities but also as an account of specific aspects concerning modern Italian cities. Penthesilea is one of these imaginary cities:

> If you ask the people you meet, "Where is Penthesilea?" they make a broad gesture, which may mean "Here," or else "Farther on," or "All around you," or even "In the opposite direction."
> "I mean the city," you ask, insistently.
> "We come here every morning to work," someone answers, while others say, "We come back here at night to sleep."
> "But the city where people live?" you ask.
> "It must be that way," they say, and some raise their arms obliquely toward an aggregation of opaque polyhedrons on the horizon, while others indicate, behind you, the specter of other spires.
> (Calvino 1972: 157)

Penthesilea is a city composed of outskirts, with no defining borders. According to Lumley and Foot, it calls into question what actually defines a city, considering that the 'old certainties built on the idea that the city is defined by walls and laws no longer pertain' (Lumley and Foot 2004: 2). Penthesilea is also a series of agglomerations with no centre that merge into the countryside. Calvino in fact adds:

> But you continue and you find instead other vague spaces, then a rusty suburb of workshops and warehouses, a cemetery, a carnival with Ferris wheel, a shambles; you start down a street of scrawny shops which fades amid patches of leprous countryside. (Calvino 1972: 157)

This 'leprous' countryside, together with rubble and ruins, is what most defines Ciprì and Maresco's Palermo cityscapes. While this type of environment constitutes only a part, albeit quite an extensive part, of the real Palermo, in Ciprì and Maresco it ends up representing the city itself. In the process of abstraction and subtraction that characterises their cinema, the city becomes a kind of Penthesilea, its spaces and quarters largely unrecognisable. In the first episode of *Totò che visse due volte*, we see Paletta's house and the brothel he frequents linked together by roads typical of the sprawling areas, although these buildings are actually located in Palermo's old town and are very much representative of the architecture of that area. In the second episode of the film, Pitrinu and Fefè live in houses typical of the old town, yet the story seems to take place mainly in the sprawling areas or in the open countryside. The same can be seen in the final episode, in the story of the Christ-like Totò and his Mafioso alter ego, where the presence of the sprawling city and the countryside is even more evident.

Not only does the old town not appear as a whole but also specific and very recognisable parts of the city, like the XIX century city, with its tree-lined avenues, are completely absent from both films. It is undeniable, however, that such a city, which has lost or never had a centre/periphery axis, is very likely to be found in today's Italy. Favara in Sicily, in the district of Agrigento, is a prime example of 'a city made only of outskirts', as Attilio Giordano defines it in making reference to Calvino's Penthesilea (Giordano 2002: 20). Favara, writes Giordano, numbers 32,000 inhabitants and is a wild agglomeration of concentrated suburbs, all illegally built, an enormous excrescence on the tiny body of the old town. There are 32,000 inhabitants but with houses for 110,000 of them; an average of four houses per family.[95] They are

[95] Many of the inhabitants are emigrants returned from Germany who on their return have bought a piece of land and built on it, without planning permission (Giordano 2002: 20).

in most cases unfinished building projects, the shells of buildings that are partially inhabited.

The motto of this city seems to have been, in Sicilian dialect, *mura e futtitinne*, 'just go ahead and build it' (ibid). For the visitor there is something which grates more than the aesthetics, writes Giordano, and that is the casualness with which the various elements have been placed, leading to a kind of urbanistic neurasthenia. You might find a building in a totally unexpected place directly in front of your car and the road curves around it, or roads going on and on endlessly with nothing at the end of them. There are no cinemas, no theatres, in fact hardly anything at all; even the schools are illegally erected buildings (ibid).

The lack of public places in the outskirts is a key element of Ciprì and Maresco's city-text. The almost complete absence of public places contributes to the depiction of a remote and lawless city emptied of signs of modernity and can be seen as a bitter reflection on a real situation.[96]

In *Lo zio di Brooklyn* and *Totò che visse due volte*, the only public places are a red light cinema, a cemetery, a dance hall (in *Lo zio di Brooklyn*) and a brothel (in *Totò che visse due volte*), which since 1959 is not a 'public' place in Italy any more. The fact that a visit to a red light cinema or to a brothel is seen as the only recreational activity in both films should not be dismissed. In Italy, from the 1970s onwards, because of the economic crisis and the advent of commercial television, many cinemas closed, while others opted for the programming of pornographic films, a genre that boomed in those years. As a consequence, there were places in Italy where the town's only cinema showed exclusively pornographic films.

[96] The state of neglect of Palermo's outskirts has often been raised by the two directors, who have organised various cultural initiatives in such areas and also opened an art house cinema in Brancaccio, a Mafia controlled quarter whose rundown blocks of flats appear in *Lo zio di Brooklyn*.

Another aspect, typical of the sprawling city that emerges from Giordano's description of Favara, is the impressive casualness of road construction and proliferation. Here again Favara's situation may be seen as quite common in Italy. Pier Luigi Cervellati highlights how these 'quarries, waste dumps, pigsties, stables [...] and an impressive amount of useless streets, alleys, highways all asphalted, bitumised and cemented in the fields, hills and plains have now become the outskirts of Italy' (Cervellati 2000: 17).

A cinematic counterpart of Cervellati's definition can be found in one of the key sequences in *Lo zio di Brooklyn*, the funeral of the Gemellis' father. The sequence is a clear homage to René Clair's *Entr'acte* (1924) where a funeral *cortège* is diverted by a chase after the careering coffin. In *Lo zio di Brooklyn* we see a funeral *cortège* headed by a horse-driven carriage moving slowly in a completely deserted road of the outskirts. At a certain point the horse starts trotting backwards and forwards several times on the same road. What we actually see, in a fixed shot, is the horse and the people in the *cortège* repeatedly passing the same place in such a chaotic way that the people end up being in front of the horse. This sequence continues with another funeral, accompanied by a band, which again takes place in an empty but wider street. In the foreground we see a man standing motionless in the middle of the street almost like a signpost for the passing funeral, while the *cortège* slowly moves forwards and a car, apparently with no driver and a coffin on top of it, crosses the road.

While on the one hand this sequence seems to recreate the idea of traffic, recalling metaphorically one of Palermo's major problems and provocatively characterising it as a traffic of coffins, on the other, given the setting in the wide empty streets around industrial warehouses and half finished houses, it highlights the uselessness of these suburban streets, which are so often completely deserted. Thanks to the use of long shots and the dilation of filmic time, the cityscape plays an

important role in this sequence. The emphasis on the cityscape persists in the first funeral even when the action becomes frantic. In the second funeral, presented through a sequence shot, the camera does not follow the funeral *cortège* but waits for it from a long distance. As a consequence, some time passes before the *cortège* gets close to the camera so that the spectator is inevitably caught up in the images of the desolate surroundings [Figure 6].

Figure 6: Funeral *cortèges* in *Lo zio di Brooklyn*

The funeral of the Gemellis' father reflects a Palermo of the past since the funeral *cortège* on foot has nowadays been replaced with a *cortège* of cars.[97] This sequence, however, constitutes at the same time one of the few moments of togetherness in *Lo zio di Brooklyn* where each character generally seems bound on a lonely trajectory. It contributes to the creation of a certain kind of community that, as we will see, while still detectable in hybrid forms in the old town, also decidedly contrasts with the way of life lived out in the suburbs of present day Italy. The outskirts have become dormitory suburbs that people leave to go to work or school and come back to only to

[97] This is the case not only in big cities, given the large distances involved and the fact that cemeteries are mostly located in the outskirts, but also in small villages where the funeral *cortège* on foot has been restricted to the distance from the house of the defunct to the nearest church (Bufalino 2001: 1153).

sleep. There is no sense of belonging and most often people live in blocks of dozens of flats without knowing their neighbours.

Another important aspect that needs to be considered, which also brings together the discussion on rubble in this chapter, is why the ruins of the war are set in the middle of the sprawling city in these films when most of them are actually located in the old town. Taking the ruins out of their context could be seen as a statement against the process of restoration carried out in the old town where the remaining ruins are gradually being erased. The process of restoration is seen by Marc Augé as 'illusory evidence of the past' (Augé 2009: 26), in contrast with 'untouched' ruins that become carriers of a concept of time seen as 'pure', 'of a time which is not the one talked about in history books and which restoration tries to bring back to life' (ibid: 8). Augé, quoting Camus, highlights how ruins assume even more this sense of 'purity' when they are seen in the countryside, far away from the city where 'everything combines to convince us that history has ended' (ibid: 41-43). This could suggest that in Ciprì and Maresco, although War ruins are clearly used for their specific association with a collective memory, they also express, when transferred from the old town to the countryside, 'pure time', a kind of time that, according to Augé, only art is able to capture (ibid: 8).

There is however a striking difference between Ciprì and Maresco's ruins and those of Tipasa, in Algeria, described by Camus. While Camus' ruins are a 'union of ruins and springtime' in which 'the ruins have returned to being stones having lost the lustre given to them by man' (ibid: 41), Ciprì and Maresco's ruins are set in an extremely desolate environment, signifying that even the countryside has reached its end. As a result, the extreme outskirts become an abstract place where today's urban degradation is compared to the consequences of the war, with the rubble from

building speculation and the rubble from wartime bombings acting as a powerful metaphor of contemporary Palermo and what remains of its tragic past.

1.3.2 Pasolini's heritage

Pasolini's *Uccellacci e uccellini* inspired *Lo zio di Brooklyn* and *Totò che visse due volte* with its use of black and white, wide panoramic shots and the predominance of barren outlying districts scattered with debris and rubbish as its main locations. These three films are discussed with reference to De Sica's *Miracolo a Milano / Miracle in Milan* (1951), the first post-war Italian film to deal with building speculation and one of the main sources of inspiration for *Uccellacci e uccellini*.

Pasolini believed that the work of an artist should interpret, maintain and protect a cultural landscape. In this context, the landscape is not just a geographical, natural environment, but above all historical and human: a composite and stratified territory that is at one and the same time a linguistic universe, a place of belonging and an artistic heritage. Unlike many other 1960s artists and intellectuals, Pasolini's main concern was not to break with but to look to the past in order to find strength and inspiration.

Pasolini moved to Rome in 1950. At first he lived in the slums around Ponte Mammolo and then in other impoverished neighbourhoods until, in 1963, he bought an apartment in EUR, a sought-after middle-class residential area, notable for its fascist neo-classical architecture. Those early years were fundamental to his work as he directly experienced the dramatic changes that Rome was going through. In one of the magazines of the time Pasolini wrote:

> Every Italian city, even those in the North, has at its outskirts, beyond the last orchards, its own small 'concentration camps' for the poorest people: warehouses, barrack-like housing or shacks. But in no other Italian city does the phenomenon present such a striking, complex and even grandiose impact, as in Rome (quoted in Konstantarakos 1992: 61).

In *Uccellacci e uccellini* this becomes the set for a collection of surreal stories based on popular Italian literary tradition: Totò and his son Ninetto wander around somewhere on the outskirts of Rome. They meet a talking left-wing raven that tells them a medieval fable of two friars who follow Saint Francis. Francis orders them to preach love to the hawks and the sparrows, which hate each other. Although the two friars succeed in talking to both species, the war between hawks and sparrows goes on. Returning to the present, Totò and Ninetto, still accompanied by the raven, demand money from their impoverished tenants, ignoring their pleas. Resuming their walk, they go to their landlord's house, where Totò is treated as cruelly as he has treated his tenants. Outside the landlord's house, the three encounter the funeral of Palmiro Togliatti, the former head of the Italian Communist party. Finally, after having sex with a prostitute, Totò and Ninetto kill and eat the raven.

Pasolini made this film to express his dissatisfaction with a country that he still perceived as fascist. At the same time, *Uccellacci e uccellini* is very critical of Marxist ideologies and to some extent self-critical too. The speeches of the talking raven, which like Pasolini speaks with a strong Bolognese accent, were conceived to resemble those of a left-wing intellectual. What Pasolini criticised Marxist intellectuals for was their inability to understand and attribute a place in History to the sub-proletariat because of its 'lack of political consciousness' (Jori 2001: 50). It was actually this lack of consciousness that, according to Pasolini, gave them a revolutionary force, the force of being an outsider, of not conforming to a society where the values of the petty bourgeoisie were becoming those of the working class.

The poor outskirts of Rome, the *borgate*, are so central to Pasolini's literary and cinematographic works that Myrto Konstantarakos sees them as the only possible option for someone like Pasolini who repudiated his class, the bourgeoisie, and

yearned for an archaic peasant world (Konstantarakos 2000). With *Uccellacci e uccellini*, Pasolini gives us a tragic picture of the consequences of building speculation, whose effects appear to have been dramatic in the few years that separate *Accattone* (1961), Pasolini's debut film, from *Uccellacci e uccellini*.

In *Accattone*, the centre/periphery axis that characterises Pasolini's novels *Ragazzi di vita / Boys of Life* (1955) and *Una vita violenta / A Violent Life* (1959) is still evident. The story is still based on the protagonists' journeys 'from the borgata to the city centre and back' (Konstantarakos 1992: 62). Moreover, the *borgate*, although seen as 'little concentration camps' with 'their space represented as shapeless, composed of building works, rubbish tips, ruins' (ibid: 61), seem at the same time to have their own landmarks.[98] According to Pasolini, the aim of the government was 'to keep the poorest parts of the population outside the city in order to reserve the centre solely for the bourgeoisie' (ibid).

Besides, in *Accattone* as well as in *Mamma Roma* (1962), although the sprawling city is already evident, there is still a clear boundary between the city and the countryside. *Mamma Roma* is the story of a prostitute who entrusts her son to relatives who live in the countryside. At the beginning of the film, in the toasts scene at the wedding banquet of Mamma Roma's ex pimp, the country people are represented as naive and good at heart. Mamma Roma herself disdainfully refers to these people as *burini*, 'peasants', while in her life in the outskirts she conforms to middle-class values and ways of living. In the outskirts, urban life is recreated and ferociously pursued by Mamma Roma, who is most happy when her son finally

[98] A scene in *Accattone* in which a newly built church in Centocelle, one of the areas most hit by building speculation in the 1960s, is shown within a cityscape of anonymous blocks of flats, is an example of this. The church, a huge painting of a Christ on its facade, can however be seen as a symbol of the control that the new middle class was exercising over the poor people of the *borgate*, most of them peasant émigrés from the South of the country.

manages to get a job in the Trastevere quarter, seen by Romans as the heart of the city.[99]

By contrast, the special environment conceived for *Uccellacci e uccellini* was exclusively that of the extreme outskirts, where the city merges into the countryside (Figure 7). A viaduct under construction is a constant presence in the Rome of Totò and Ninetto's wanderings. The countryside and its world are not detached from the city as in *Mamma Roma*.

Figure 7: The sprawling city in Pasolini's *Uccellacci e uccellini* (1966)

Their wanderings take place in a land of rubble and rubbish that could be any sprawling city. [100] The same happens in Ciprì and Maresco's *Lo zio di Brooklyn* and *Totò che visse due volte*, where there are no landmarks, cars are almost absent, and people walk from place to place. The difference is that the urban reality shown by Pasolini highlights the expansion of building speculation at its peak, as the film often focuses on building sites and cranes. In Ciprì and Maresco, on the other hand, there

[99] See also chapter 2.3.2.

[100] This 'anonymity' of place in *Uccellacci e uccellini* is also created by a sense of dislocation through the existence of improbable signs such as the road sign showing 'Istanbul 4,253 Km' or improbable road names like 'Via Benito La Lacrima, disoccupato' ('Benito 'The Tear', Unemployed'). This element recalls and pays homage to De Sica's *Miracolo a Milano*, where we see signs such as '5 X 5 = 25 Road' and '1 X 1 = 1 Square' in the fields where the homeless live.

are no signs of work in progress. Building speculation has already destroyed a landscape now characterised by badly built or half- finished houses.

In De Sica too we have a surreal, fable-like story that however offers two very distinct worlds: the very rich who live in the centre and the very poor who live in the periphery and aspire to move to the centre. *Miracolo a Milano* is the story of Totò, who is found in a cabbage patch by an old woman who raises him. When she dies he goes into an orphanage and after leaving the orphanage joins a group of homeless people and becomes their leader. They build huts in a vacant lot that eventually becomes their own place and they defend it against the interests of an unscrupulous mob [Figure 8]. In *Miracolo a Milano* the contrast of contemptuous wealth versus abject poverty is very marked and moments of depression alternate with great optimism. Emphasis is placed on facial expressions and mimicry, as in Pasolini where close-ups abound and Totò and Ninetto are often seen dancing and singing, showing a great attachment to life and its joys.[101]

Figure 8: Vittorio De Sica's *Miracolo a Milano* (1951)

[101] Emblematic of this joy is the finale where first Totò and then Ninetto have sex with a prostitute and amuse her with some jokes. All of them seem to share an almost childlike cheerfulness and candour that Pasolini seems to confirm in some parts of the film and question in others.

In Ciprì and Maresco there is no hint of vitality, characters are often mute and immobile. Spatial dislocation is created by a sense of void, by the absence of any distinguishable signs. While creating a world that recalls Pasolini, it is in reality very different from Pasolini's, in the same way that his vision was distinctively different from De Sica's dualism. The message of *Uccellacci e uccellini* - that 'Hawks and sparrows will always fight, it is the world that needs to be changed' – is a message, however, that acknowledges a sense of defeat or at least disenchantment with a world that Pasolini continued nevertheless to idealise.[102]

De Sica's Milan, Pasolini's Rome and Ciprì and Maresco's Palermo symbolise three different stages of post-war Italy: the beginning of the building speculation with its tough and unscrupulous characteristics in De Sica's early 1950s, the actual transformation and inclusion of the countryside in the city in Pasolini's late 1960s, and the desolate wastelands of Ciprì and Maresco's 1990s. Three different stages that represent the passage from a country completely projected into the 'new', but still rooted in its rural culture (Totò in *Miracolo a Milano* is found in a cabbage patch), to a country that seems to have rejected its roots (in *Uccellacci e uccellini* Pasolini draws a parallel between the conditions of the Italian peasantry and those in 'third world' through the use of Chinese music and other cultural references to China), and finally in Ciprì and Maresco to a country where, as we will see, peasant culture is already a thing of the past.

Since *Uccellacci e uccellini*, the sprawling city has never been conceived as the main screenscape in Italian cinema. The work of Sergio Citti, who was born and raised in the *borgate* like his brother Franco, Pasolini's on-screen *alter ego,* [103] constitutes an exception. The squalor of the Roman slums becomes a constant feature

[102] See also chapter 2.3.3.
[103] Franco Citti plays Accattone in Pasolini's debut film and Oedipus in Pasolini's most autobiographical film *Edipo re / Oedipus Rex* (1967).

in Sergio Citti's *Cartoni Animati* / *Cartoons*, a 1998 film released only in 2004. *Cartoni Animati*, in which Franco Citti was both an actor and co-director, is an homage to Pasolini and recalls *Miracolo a Milano*. *Cartoni Animati*, like *Miracolo a Milano*, is the story of a group of underdogs presented in a fable-like way and displaying nostalgia for the world that *Miracolo a Milano* represents, a world revolving around the fulfilment of basic needs.

In this context, Ettore Scola's *Brutti sporchi e cattivi / Ugly, Dirty and Bad* (1976), featuring Sergio Citti's contribution as scriptwriter, is also worth mentioning. This film too is set in the *borgate*, but here the shantytown characters lose the innocence that we find in Pasolini and, in their struggle to survive everyday life, become realistic portraits of extreme social degradation.[104]

Apart from these and a few other cases, the sprawling city has only been featured in Italian cinema in relation to the city centre. The centre-periphery axis characterises Alessandro Piva's *LaCapaGira / My Head is Spinning* (2000), a film that pitilessly depicts Bari's sprawling areas as immersed in rubbish and illegal dumps. *LaCapaGira* features a nocturnal city that leads a double life, where the continuous movement of 'merchandise' from the outskirts to the centre includes the trafficking of illegal immigrants as well as packages of drugs.[105]

During the period that Ciprì and Maresco worked together, the countryside itself, or rather what is left of it, received scant consideration from Italian filmmakers. Some films like Sergio Rubini's *Il viaggio della sposa / The Bride's Journey* (1997), Davide Ferrario's *I figli di Annibale / Children of Hannibal* (1998) and Cristina Comencini's *Liberate i pesci / Free the Fish* (2000) propose journeys into the 'wilds'

[104] The film's central character, Giacinto, lives with his wife and their ten children in a cardboard shack. Having lost his eye while at work, Giacinto receives a settlement he tries to hide from the rest of the family, who concentrate on stealing it from him.
[105] See also chapter 3.3.

of the rather tame countryside of regions like Puglia. Other films, like the internationally successful *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso* (1989) and *Il postino* (1994), perpetuate the image of an idyllic and uncontaminated countryside, an image often associated with nostalgia for 'rural' Italy. Very few films have dealt with the transformation that the countryside underwent in those years. A notable exception, as already mentioned,[106] is Giordana's *I cento passi* which represents the ugliness of new unregulated and illegal development and the horror of new codes and ways of living dictated by economic values that have profoundly affected even small communities.

Giordana, who sees Pasolini as his main point of reference, seems not to have forgotten what Pasolini said in 1975, on the occasion of the TV release of *Accattone*, about the 'genocide of peasant culture'. What Pasolini pointed out at that time was that something had changed in Italy since 1961, the year in which *Accattone* was released; he said that 'there has been a genocide, a whole population culturally destroyed' (Pasolini 1991: 154). Pasolini essentially declared the end of a traditional culture and denounced the way that even the lower classes were increasingly conforming to middle-class values. He saw this as the product of a homogenising culture, of a phenomenon that he then called *omologazione* and that we now know as 'globalisation'. Ciprì and Maresco take Pasolini's views to their extreme conclusion. While Pasolini, despite his rage, continued to nourish a sense of hope anchored to a fascination with the 'myth of innocence' that peasant culture exerted over him, Ciprì and Maresco see this myth as dead and buried and parody it.

An emblematic example of this is the first episode of *Totò che visse due volte*, where the unrelenting situations of bad luck experienced by the penniless Paletta are set to Bach's *Saint Matthew's Passion*, the music used by Pasolini in *Accattone*. While Pasolini's intention, scandalising the public of the time, was to highlight the

[106] See chapter 1.2.

sacred dimension of the sub-proletariat in the figure of Accattone, seen as a victim of society, notwithstanding that he is a pimp, in *Totò che visse due volte*, in the absence of any reference to a bourgeois upper-class, Paletta is above all the victim of the cruel practical jokes of his peers, with whom he shares an animal-like existence dictated by hunger for sex and food. Paletta, who never speaks, possesses two basic facial expressions; a very sad and afflicted one, used also as a sort of *Commedia dell'Arte* mask for attracting people's attention, and a cheerful and greedy one that characterises him when he manages to fulfil his needs. He possesses none of the internal torment that leads Accattone to declare himself happy in his dying moment.[107]

While in *Uccellacci e uccellini* the countryside no longer exists as such, Pasolini continued to search for it, first in the South of Italy, where he set his *Vangelo secondo Matteo / The Gospel According to Matthew* (1964) and *Il Decamerone / Decameron* (1971), and then in the Yemen, where he set *Il fiore delle mille e una notte / Arabian Nights* (1974).

Pasolini remained faithful until the end to this myth, 'according to which the peasantry, sub-proletariat, and Third World represent existence outside of Western history' (Viano 1993: 7). Viano writes that, nurtured by Catholicism, Pasolini's ideas, 'suffered from his condescending superiority complex' (ibid) clearly evinced by occasional comments such as: 'Quite incredible is the inner disorder, the unawareness and shamelessness of these peasant kids. Their impure laughter kept resounding amidst senseless words - a bunch of apes' (ibid). Sam Rhodie even compares Pasolini's 'nostalgic regret at the loss of primitivism' to the works of Nazi writers, although he observes at the same time that much of Western culture, like for example Claude Lévy-Strauss' anthropology, has been based on the imperialist concept of

[107] See chapter 2.3.3.

'*nous et les autres'* (Rhodie 1995: 129). This myth does not survive in Ciprì and Maresco, notwithstanding their recreation of an archaic peasant world in which the sprawling city, as in Pasolini, becomes the background for the representation of human beings from the streets, who represent a kind of humanity on the margins and a peasant cultural heritage.[108]

1.3.3 A certain kind of rural

The intention here is to see how rurality in *Lo zio di Brooklyn* and *Totò che visse due volte* can be defined and to what extent such a representation reflects social aspects of today's Palermo. There are two elements that reveal how the rural, or rather a certain kind of rural, has supplanted the urban in Ciprì and Maresco's Palermo: the predominance of the sky and the absence of the sea. The sky, which is often seen with clouds moving swiftly across it, acts as a key reminder of a peasant culture. If contemporary life, with its continual suppression of the peasant world, has distanced us from nature - teaching us to ignore it, on the grounds that it has no influence over us and is in any event subject to our control - in Ciprì and Maresco's Palermo it returns in full force. The sky represents the fear and knowledge of death ever-present in the archaic world. It is the sky that regulates this world, even though we must take into account that this context, in spite of the presence of donkeys, pigs and chickens, is not in the least agricultural.

In Ciprì and Maresco's Palermo there is no working of the land, indeed there is hardly any kind of work at all. It is a world closed in upon itself, defined as such by the exclusion of the sea. The presence of the sea would represent an opening onto another world but it is conspicuously absent from their cityscape and no one looks

[108] See also chapter 2.3.

towards the sea, hidden as it is by huge buildings.[109] This rural character of their films is confirmed by the fact that, in spite of the large urban spaces, the function of the 'church tower' in a rural community, with its guiding presence, is recreated; in the guise of the cinema hall, for example, where the collective rite of masturbation takes place, or in the guise of the brothel where all the men meet up. Besides, as discussed in section 1.1, these inhabitants all know one another.

It is a small, closed community where no one new arrives. The only newcomer is the mysterious uncle from Brooklyn in *Lo zio di Brooklyn*, whose arrival has something of the supernatural about it. In fact *zio* or uncle is easily transformed into *dio* or god, as the title of a collection of Ciprì and Maresco's works, *Solo un zio ci può salvare* ('Only an Uncle Can Save Us'), in which the word 'god' in a famous phrase of Heidegger's is substituted by 'uncle', demonstrates.[110]

On the one hand the absence of the sea contributes to the creation of a rural world, on the other it reflects a characteristic of today's Palermo. Palermo, which derives its name from the sea (from *Panhormous* = all port), seems to have turned its back on the sea, the sea as a point of departure and the means of liberation from the church tower, which directs and holds life in the same place (Cassano 1996: 16). As Michele Cometa observes, the inhabitants of Palermo in the past knew that 'all kinds of riches and danger' came from the sea, whereas the modern inhabitants have reduced it to 'a summer umbilical cord': 'they only think of it when they need to take the boat to go on their summer holidays and the boat is the most convenient form of transport; within 24 hours you can get to Genoa on the mainland' (Cometa 1998: 32).

[109] There is only one scene, in *Totò che visse due volte*, where the sea is shown. It is the scene in which the Totò / Christ figure is introduced, coming from the sea, like a pagan god, rather than from the sky.
[110] In *Totò che visse due volte*'s third episode the uncle figure is replaced directly by the Christ-like character of Totò (Totò is the abbreviated form of *Salvatore* or 'Saviour').

Aspects that recall a rural culture are to be found in a study carried out by Vincenzo Masini (1984) in some areas of the old town. This study reveals that the inhabitants of the Capo quarter of the old town had rarely been into the neighbouring quarter, in other words a distance of less than 500 metres. Masini emphasises how borders are created and relationships strengthened in order to create a protective world similar to life in a rural community. Life lived on the street is typical of these quarters. While this is a characteristic of Mediterranean life, here it is explained by the impossibility of living indoors. Very often buildings are overcrowded, dangerous and malodorous, obliging the inhabitants to spend most of the day sitting outside in front of their homes. It is a life lived in close contact with others, who become party to every aspect of existence and are finally absorbed into the family nucleus via acquired family connections, for example by becoming godmothers and godfathers. *Zio*, or z*ù* in dialect, is the name given to these people, a title that is also a form of respect like the Spanish *don*. The character of the uncle in *Lo zio di Brooklyn* can thus be seen as a symbol of this mentality that turns individuals from outside into members of the family. Indeed, in the film the uncle is looked after by the Gemelli family, even though he is a perfect stranger to them, and ends up becoming an essential element of their microcosm.

As in other Italian cities, the upper and lower middle classes of Palermo distance themselves from this culture and associate it with those who come from outside, from the countryside, whom they disdainfully refer to as *pedi 'ncritati* or muddy feet. The influences of this culture tend therefore to be explained as a recent phenomenon, as a result of internal emigration. There are areas in Palermo with a certain agricultural quality, like Oreto and Ciaculli where there is an orchard in the middle of a park that has been the cause of many disputes (Carta 1996: 108). Palermo, however, does not possess an 'agro-town' character, unlike nearby Bagheria or

Sciacca and Termini Imerese. In the past these towns lived almost entirely on agriculture, with the peasants leaving in the morning to work in the surrounding fields, combining the 'culture of the village, its primitive reality, of direct experiences and relationships' with 'the culture of the town, made up of unwritten laws, of unbreakable traditions, of interdependency' (Zevi 2007: 57). These towns still preserve this mixed character. Palermo, by contrast, is a city projected inwards rather than outwards. It is in the heart of the city, in the old town, that life pulsates with its street markets and small shops, which, in spite of the difficulty of surviving, still play a decisive role in the economy of the city.

One conclusion that can be drawn is that Ciprì and Maresco's Palermo, although set in a sort of indefinite time and with customs that recall an archaic society, still reflects important aspects of contemporary Palermo. This does not necessarily mean that Palermo should be regarded as a city that still retains a strong sense of the rural, as was the case for Palermo and many other Italian cities in the past. However, by emphasising the rural and reducing, subtracting and abstracting the urban, the two directors have created a city of rubble that cannot be ignored, where, dispersed in a desolate wasteland, we find the remains of a culture that today's Italians are ill at ease with and try to repress.

Chapter 2

Bodies

Ciprì and Maresco's Palermo is inhabited by middle-aged and elderly men, some of whom wear female clothes and play the roles of women, whose bodies are often half-naked, obese, deformed or disfigured. Placing the discussion in the context of influences from directors from the past and contrasting the approaches used by Ciprì and Maresco with those of contemporary Italian directors, this chapter will focus on what most characterises these bodies and the way they inhabit space, analysing how Ciprì and Maresco's approaches to filming them reflect their aesthetic and philosophical preoccupations. The social and cultural implications that such an unconventional and provocative portrayal of the human body expresses will be considered taking into account changes in post-war Italy and in Palermo in particular. The issues the films raise in terms of marginality, gender transgression and identification and the spectator's expectations and perceptions will also be discussed. Finally, the last part of the chapter will explore how the characters' actions and feelings are influenced by an insatiable hunger and, linked to this, an omnipresent sense of mortality representing a life that feeds off death.

2.1 The Carnivalesque

The first part of this section will focus on how an understanding of the 'neo-baroque' can be useful in interpreting Ciprì and Maresco's cinema and how, with its links to 'carnival', it assumes particular relevance in the discussion of the body. Both based on the idea of excess, the neo-baroque and carnival have frequently been linked and carnival is investigated by Bakhtin in the context of peasant culture. These

connections are vital to an understanding of Ciprì and Maresco's world, evoking a primitive, rural society inhabiting the ruins of a post-industrial cityscape.

With its emphasis on transgression and subversion, carnival is discussed in relation to the philosophy of the Kynics, adopting the modern interpretation of Kynicism as proposed by Peter Sloterdijk (1988), whose work is said to have influenced the two directors. Finally, with reference to the work of Michel de Certeau (1988), we will see how this unconventional portrayal of the human body may be understood in the context of forms of resistance developed by people who live on the margins of society.

2.1.1 Neo-baroque trajectories

As discussed,[111] in spite of its distinctiveness, Ciprì and Maresco's cinema can be defined within a postmodern framework. In this chapter we look at how the 'neo-baroque' brings together many of the aspects that are usually attributed to the postmodern, and how both are of particular relevance in the discussion of the body.

In *Neo-Baroque Aesthetics and Contemporary Entertainment* (2004), Angela Ndalianis identifies neo-baroque as a formal quality of the postmodern and observes that the strongest connection between the postmodern and the neo-baroque emerged in the 1950s in Latin America, where neo-baroque became a form of resistance against ruling political systems. Ndalianis provides us with a description of Latin American neo-baroque that helps us to see the connection with the postmodern and its relevance to Ciprì and Maresco's cinema. Neo-baroque is defined as a poetics of

> […] minimal or lack of concern with the development and a preference for a multiple and fragmented structure that recalls the form of a labyrinth; open rather than closed form; a complexity and layering evident, for example, in the merging of genre and literary forms [...]; a world in which dream and reality are indistinguishable; view of the illusory nature of the world – a world as

[111] See the third part of the Introduction.

> theater; a virtuosity revealed through stylistic flourish and allusion; and a self-reflexivity that requires active audience engagement. (Ndalianis 2004: 15)

Gilles Deleuze's *Le pli. Leibniz et le Baroque* (1988), published in English as *The Fold* (Deleuze 1992b), elucidates the concept of neo-baroque. Deleuze argues that Leibniz's concept of 'monad' is the basis for a reflection on the status of contemporary arts. Leibniz's monad is explained as a 'simple substance', defined in terms of folds of space, movement and time; each of them is indivisible and immaterial and has no parts as it does not depend on anything else for its existence. The number of monads is infinite and they are all different from each other. The world is therefore imagined as a continuum of folds and surfaces that turn and interleave through compressed time and space. According to Deleuze, Leibniz anticipates contemporary ideas of history as multi-layered combinations in which signs are always in motion and the subject is always in the process of becoming.

It is however thanks to Omar Calabrese that the importance of the neo-baroque in the arts is brought into focus. In his *L'età neobarocca* (1987), published in English as *Neo-Baroque*: *A Sign of the Times* (1992), and included in *Il Neobarocco. Forma e dinamiche della cultura contemporanea* (2013), Calabrese highlights that in the current age there is a taste for the neo-baroque that remained latent in the past, in part because an ideological prejudice persisted for centuries against the ideals and conventions of 1600s and early 1700s baroque (Calabrese 2013: 21). Calabrese points out that the concept of the 'straight line' has in modern times been rejected and instead the 'fragmentary' and 'dispersed' have come to the fore leading to a life obsessed with labyrinthine images.

The most characteristic aspects of the neo-baroque are surprise, virtuosity and originality at all costs. These qualities, according to Calabrese, have nonetheless over time become stereotyped and all too often form has come to prevail over content. The

idea of art as a game, and therefore by definition disengaged, 'art for art's sake', is also connected to this. Calabrese sees this as the loss of balance between expression and content and when one of these aspects prevails over the other, style 'degenerates' because both are essential. Calabrese adds that when we are watching a film that lacks formal beauty and is built around an overcomplicated plot, with twists and turns and too many characters, we are witnessing a negative evolution of style because what we are seeing is a search for complexity that has become estranged from the need for form (ibid: 38-42). In an interview with Krešimir Purgar, Calabrese cites Larry and Andy Wachowski's *The Matrix* (1999) as an example of neo-baroque, maintaining that with the third of the series, *The Matrix: Revolutions* (2003),[112] 'we have almost the same thing, perhaps trying to reach some sort of conclusion but using the exact same special effects' (Purgar 2006b).

Calabrese suggests that a discussion of the merits of individual artists is counter-productive, though a distinction seems implicit when he talks about different levels of 'degeneration'. Besides, what Calabrese says about *The Matrix*, several years after the publication of *L'età neobarocca*, points to a new neo-baroque that is even more deprived of innovative drive. However, by categorizing the late neo-baroque as degenerative, we fail to take into account the importance of artists like Ciprì and Maresco who reject the idea of art mainly as entertainment and instead aim to provoke the spectator, and within whose poetics irony becomes a form of resistance.[113]

Ndalianis' aforementioned *Neo-Baroque Aesthetics and Contemporary Entertainment* is helpful to our analysis since, although referring in the title to

[112] *The Matrix* series is set in a future where what seems to be reality is in fact the 'Matrix', a complex simulation created by intelligent machines to control and subjugate people.
[113] Calabrese admits that 'there are as well positive developments', that fortunately the spirit of invention remains, but he nonetheless maintains that these elements are, all the same, 'hidden' and therefore not predominant (Calabrese 2013: 24).

'entertainment', it nonetheless acknowledges the subversive spirit that the baroque has instilled into the arts. Quoting Henri Focillion, Ndalianis (2004: 8-9) points out that the concept of baroque should not be confined to any particular historical period but should be seen as trans-historical, an artistic attitude that has traversed centuries, the effects of which can be found in artistic movements such as modernism and surrealism. Ndalianis adds that it is misleading to define the neo-baroque as 'simply something that stands outside any recognisable schematic or not to have any canon'. With reference to directors such as Peter Greenaway and Federico Fellini, Ndalianis reminds us how the neo-baroque is also associated with a certain type of art cinema, with artists who work creatively within specific formal canons (ibid: 9).

A neo-baroque aesthetic can be found in the work of Italian directors who have influenced Ciprì and Maresco and whose legacy they have carried forward: Federico Fellini (as acknowledged by Ndalianis), Pier Paolo Pasolini and Carmelo Bene. Fellini's cinema celebrates the concept of invention and continuous spectacle. It is no surprise that the term most used to describe Fellini's cinema is 'illusionism', explored by Sam Rhodie in relation to one of Fellini's films, *E la nave va / And the Ship Sails On* (1983),[114] a film that involves a continuous overturning of classical cinema conventions, especially the way in which narration manipulates reality. In the film a journalist who acts as narrator casts doubt on the veracity of the story told in the film, while at the same time the documentary the journalist is supposedly working on is shown being made in the film itself. The film reveals that 'all you see and all that occurs has been staged'; the pleasure therefore consists not in the truth of things but in 'their staging as make-believe' (Rhodie 2002: 70).[115]

[114] *And the Ship Sails On* (1983), set in 1914, follows the journey of a cruise ship that leaves Italy with the ashes of a famous opera singer on board, accompanied by her former friends and colleagues.

[115] Other aspects in common between the baroque visions of Fellini and Ciprì and Maresco will be discussed in chapter 3.1, through an analysis of the self-reflexive and polysemic nature of Ciprì and Maresco's film *Il ritorno di Cagliostro*.

The same characteristics appear in Pasolini who, before becoming a filmmaker himself, worked closely with Fellini as a scriptwriter. Pasolini defined himself as a 'mannerist', referring to a historical period of the later years of the Italian Renaissance/early baroque in which a greater balance between form and content is reputed to have been achieved and therefore before the 'degeneration' attributed to the late baroque of the XVIII century. The term 'manner' was already being used in the XV and XVI centuries to indicate what we today refer to as style and which was seen as the search for perfection that goes beyond naturalism. While the masters of the previous generation, inspired by classical art, codified the rules according to which nature could be imitated, mannerist artists were able to bend them to their will, making reality more 'subjective' by going beyond the mere representation of nature and towards 'pure' creativity. In *La ricotta* (1963), for instance, a film about the making of a film on the life of Christ, Pasolini switches between black and white and full colour representations in *tableau* form of the depositions of Christ respectively by Rosso Fiorentino (1494-1540) and Pontormo (1494-1557), two of the most unconventional mannerist painters. Inspired by Mannerism, Pasolini is visionary in his approach, making use of the richness of his many and varied references both literary and filmic, including self-references, often in contrast with each other.

While in Fellini the overturning of traditional film conventions and the predilection for spectacle leads to a certain balance between form and content and in Pasolini the drive to express his political views sometimes leads to the favouring of content over form, in Carmelo Bene we find the most extreme expression of the concept of neo-baroque, where the distinction between form and content ceases to exist. We witness a complete upheaval of the cinematic medium in a spectacle imbued with a whole tradition of baroque in which Bene grew up, a highly decorative

late flowering in the South of Italy known as *barocco leccese*,[116] which he pays homage to in his best known film, *Nostra Signora dei Turchi* (1968). The film is a sort of imaginary autobiography, constructed around references and self-references, which the author himself has defined as 'a collage of sounds and images in which the plot is merely a pretext' (Saba 2005: 56). Disregarding any rules, concentrating above all on a continuous game of twists and turns and employing complex editing and different coloured film lenses, Bene aims to present a fluctuating 'fluid' vision of reality (ibid: 55).

These insights into the neo-baroque will be used as the basis for focusing on one of its core elements, the human body. The discussion of the body in postmodern aesthetics covers both mainstream cinema, with its emphasis on 'splatter' and 'gore' and, above all, a cinema that aims to be a divergent and stimulating counter-culture, whose relationship with its audience is provoking and upsetting (Samuel Bayer, George Romero, Eli Roth, Lars von Trier, etc.). This is consistent with a tradition of provocative art from the Dadaists (Hugo Ball, Emmy Hennings, Hans Arp, Francis Picabia, etc.) to the surrealists (Luis Buñuel, Georges Bataille, André Breton, Alexander Jodorowsky, etc.), from the underground and *avant-garde* (Jack Smith, the Kuchar twins, Andy Warhol, Paul Morrissey, etc.) and to audiovisual installation artists (Vito Acconci, Bill Viola, Matthew Barney, Pipilotti Rist, etc.).

In classical baroque itself the preoccupation with the body and its senses becomes the centre point between the two poles of experience: the one directed towards the outside world and the other directed towards inner knowledge. From this perspective the body often assumes richly curvaceous 'abandoned' forms and can,

[116] Rudolf Wittkower, in his *Art and Architecture in Italy 1600-1750*, highlights the 'charming, volatile, and often abstruse' nature of this distinctive type of late baroque, giving an overall impression of 'stylistic unity and uniformity' (Wittkower1982: 399). It takes its name from the Apulian town of Lecce, its development being favoured by the ease with which the local stone could be sculpted.

taking up Deleuze's discussion, be understood as an eternal wave, epitomised by Gian Lorenzo Bernini's *The Rape of Proserpina* [Figure 9]. Bernini (1598-1680), considered the 'greatest genius of the Italian Baroque' (Wittkower 1982: 143), showed in his figures the 'transitory', 'their immediacy and near-to-life quality', supported by the gripping realism of detail and 'the differentiation of texture' (ibid: 145). Pluto's fingers, literally sinking into the flesh of Proserpina's thigh, and the harmonious composition of curvaceous forms render the scene extremely realistic and dramatic.

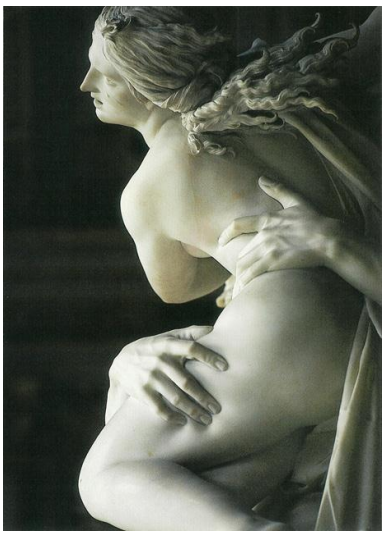

Figure 9: Gian Lorenzo Bernini's *The Rape of Proserpina* (1621-1622)

A preoccupation with the human body and a predilection for large forms is a characteristic element of Fellini's cinema, shaping it throughout. Bodies that are grotesque, deformed, or contorted out of shape and unconventional faces abound, forming a haunting world. Fellini's influence is noticeable in Pasolini, though in Pasolini the emphasis is on the male body. For Pasolini the body itself is a signifier of a cultural context and from this derives his lack of interest in professional actors, favouring instead individuals whose mere physicality is capable of adding layers of meaning to the film. Based on an approach to film-making where traditional acting skills are of secondary importance, Pasolini aimed at a 'language of physical

presence', 'because things, by the mere fact of being there, act upon the subject' (Viano 1993: 34). It is in relation to this aspect that a comparison with Ciprì and Maresco is most valuable, since they also, like Pasolini, place a particular emphasis on the nude male form, a re-appropriation of the male body that can be seen as a reaction to a female-centric cinematic tradition.

In Bene, too, the male body is central, but rather than searching for a grotesque or expressive body, Bene concentrates on negation, mutilation and the consequent attempt to 'escape' from the body. This recalls a baroque tradition according to which privation of the body and self-inflicted pain were used to procure a detachment from reality and removal to a higher plane. In Bene this does not correspond to a form of religious ecstasy but to a state of grace, that of the 'cretini' (simple-minded) as he defines them in *Nostra Signora dei Turchi*. It is a state of mind that becomes a form of resistance against the dominant culture, a kind of 'non thinking' that, as in Christian tradition, celebrates the 'purity' of the unquestioning faithful. In Bene this state of grace is continually elusive and never achieved, while in Ciprì and Maresco it becomes the fixed object of parody, revealing by contrast the meanest and most vile sentiments of a certain kind of humanity. Emblematic of this is the character of Paletta in *Totò che visse due volte*,[117] who represents a type of individual that accepts with resignation even the most extreme humiliation and infliction of physical pain, forming one of the trio of crucified figures in the story.

As in Bene, the neo-baroque in Ciprì and Maresco is focused on an aesthetic of excess and the desire to constantly provoke, even though, like Pasolini, they are also driven by anthropological concerns related to the passage from a rural to a post-industrial society. The two directors have in common with Bene a lingering fixation on the body, while their taste for the grotesque and conception of cinema as a magical

[117] See chapter 1.1.

illusion recall Fellini.[118] However, in Ciprì and Maresco this is turned around and viewed from an ironic perspective, highlighting the alienating and isolating effect that art can have on the artist, threatening physical and mental health and leading to a dangerous sort of regression.[119]

2.1.2 The carnivalesque body

The concept of carnival overlays and is intricately connected to the discussion on the neo-baroque. Here Mikhail Bakhtin is again of particular relevance, in this instance his influential work *Rabelais and his World* (2009) in which traditional carnival and its close associations with peasant culture are explored. Carnivals enjoyed enormous popularity in the baroque period, the most important being the Venice carnival, which lasted for a whole season and gave way to all kinds of intrigues and illicit business facilitated by the wearing of masks, encouraging the adoption of a double personality (Torselli 2008).

Bakhtin makes reference to particular popular feast practices in Sicily that he saw as the remnants of Rabelais' world (Bakhtin 2009: 434). Even though they have inevitably changed with the passage of time, these feast practices are one of the topoi of Ciprì and Maresco's cinema, in particular *Lo zio di Brooklyn*, where the background to the film is a religious festival, representing one of the few moments of social aggregation for the otherwise isolated characters.

What emerges right from the first scenes of *Lo zio di Brooklyn* is a rural world surviving among the ruins of the urban world, where men, some dressed as women, participate in a gloomy carnival characterised by hastily gorged food and continuous

[118] See chapter 3.1.

[119] Artists are always represented as failures in Ciprì and Maresco's cinema, for instance the character of the singer in *Lo zio di Brooklyn* and above all, as we will see in chapter 3.1, the character of the actor Erroll Douglas in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro*, who ends up in a lunatic asylum as well as the two film directors, the La Marca brothers, who become bankrupt - undoubtedly an ironic autobiographical reference to Ciprì and Maresco's own financial vicissitudes.

ridicule of the weakest. As in Rabelais' *Gargantua*, in Ciprì and Maresco we find ourselves faced with a hyperbolic world of fantasy that acts as an irreverent reflection of the real world. The key difference is that what is represented is a particular kind of rural world that takes into account the radical changes faced by peasant culture in post-war Italy and the hybrid forms that this culture has developed in metropolitan environments like Palermo.

According to Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (2014: 303), Bakhtin's definition of carnival embraces 'an anti-classical aesthetic that rejects formal harmony and unity in favour of the asymmetrical, the heterogeneous'. This is also an aesthetic of the body: 'Against the static, classic, finished beauty of antique sculpture, carnival counterposes the mutable transgressive "grotesque body", rejecting what might be called the "fascism of beauty": the construction of an ideal type of language of beauty in relation to which other types are seen as inferior "dialectical variations"' (ibid: 303). Ciprì and Maresco have invented a language of beauty applicable to the world they have created. While they are far removed from commonly accepted canons of beauty, their characters move with a harmony that derives from an inner sense of satisfaction with their own corporeal reality.

As we will see in chapter 2.3, for Bakhtin peasant culture was concerned principally with life and death as two inseparable entities in the continuous cycle of birth and renewal. The body seen in its overflowing enormity is the cardinal reference-point of this cycle. Bakhtin defines the grotesque as 'all that seeks to go out beyond the body's confines' (Bakhtin 2009: 317). From their first works on video, Ciprì and Maresco have featured shots of enormous bodies filling the frame, naked from the waist up, leading us on to what Bakhtin sees as the cosmic characteristics of the body:

> The body and bodily life have a cosmic and at the same time an all-people character; this is not the body and its physiology in the modern sense of these words, because it is not individualised. The material bodily principle is contained not in the biological individual, not in the bourgeois ego, but in the people, a people who are continually growing and renewed, This is why all that is bodily becomes grandiose, exaggerated, immeasurable' (Bakhtin 2009: 19). [...]
> 'The grotesque body is cosmic and universal. It stresses elements common to the entire cosmos: earth, water, fire, air; it is directly related to the sun, to the stars. It contains the signs of the zodiac. It reflects the cosmic hierarchy. This body can merge with various natural phenomena, with mountains, rivers, islands and continents. It can fill the entire universe' (ibid: 318).

Nessun dorma, a video from the 1992-1996 *Cinico TV* television series, reflects this concept of the grotesque body as cosmic. One of their regular actors, Giuseppe Paviglianiti, is filmed naked from the waist up, standing immobile and staring fixedly [Figure 10], while the soundtrack, the 'Nessun dorma' aria from Puccini's *Turandot*, bestows solemnity and a transcendent quality to his naked torso. In a repeated smooth panning shot, commencing with his stomach and ending with an extreme close-up of his vacant expression, the camera explores Paviglianiti's naked body, recalling the 'mountains, rivers, islands and continents' that Bakhtin refers to. Paviglianiti's stomach, almost isolated from the rest of the body, assumes the shape of the moon, thanks also to the night-time connotations of the aria,[120] while the navel acts as a reference to the 'omphalos'[121] and its connections with the divine. Pushed beyond his physicality, Paviglianiti's body becomes an abstraction, losing its corporeality to take on an almost explicitly pregnant form, representing, in all its anguish, the missing feminine element in Ciprì and Maresco's world.[122]

[120] At the beginning of the final act, in the moonlit palace gardens, Calaf reflects on Princess Turandot alone in her bedroom: 'None shall sleep! None shall sleep! Even you, O Princess, in your cold bedroom, watch the stars that tremble with love and with hope!'
[121] The 'omphalos' was a religious stone artifact representing the navel, believed in ancient times to allow people to communicate with the Gods.
[122] See chapter 2.2.

Figure 10: Giuseppe Paviglianiti in *Nessun dorma*

The use of classical music to connote a character, also used in *Totò che visse due volte*, once more recalls Pasolini. However, while in Pasolini's *Accattone* (1961) Bach's *St Matthew Passion* served to denote the 'sacredness' of people relegated to the margins of society, emphasising the tragic hardship of their everyday existence, in Ciprì and Maresco this association is mainly used with a parodistic intent. The choice of Puccini is significant since Ciprì and Maresco's characters are, in fact, the antithesis of Puccini's tragic heroes; for them there are no feelings or actions that are worth dying for and their main preoccupation is the battle for survival. Consequently, the moving melodic power of the music combined with the cosmic image of the body, the focus on the omphalos and Paviglianiti's fixed gaze towards the sky, creates a sort of bathos, missing the tragic and resulting in ridicule.[123]

One cannot speak of hedonism with reference to these bodies, but they nonetheless recall a certain hedonistic culture, or what remains of a culture in which rounded forms have always held a certain fascination. Food has been an abiding pleasure of the South of Italy, further indicated by the fact that, in the years that Ciprì and Maresco made these films, Palermo was one of the Italian cities with the highest

[123] As will be discussed in chapter 2.3.3.

consumption of foodstuffs (Alongi 1998: 5). However, as Maude Ellman observes, 'fat has gone from being a sign of affluence to a sign of poverty' (quoted in Russo 1994: 188). These bodies, therefore, are images of the 'new' poor, of the 'otherness' against which modern canons of beauty are set and at the same time this focus on the huge forms of some of these actors reflects the enduring fascination of the 'freak show', of voyeuristically looking at those who are considered 'different'. [124]

Ciprì and Maresco's lingering over the rounded forms of Paviglianiti can be seen as a celebration of life and abundance from the perspective of people who are the remnants of a peasant culture haunted by hunger and driven by the fight for survival. Bakhtin's claim that the folk of Rabelais' world picked their noses and farted and enjoyed doing so seems particularly relevant here. However, in contrast to the traditional image of peasant culture, celebrated with a joyful and triumphant hilarity in Rabelais, Ciprì and Maresco's characters are very much alone and, even though the family structure is recreated, each seems bound on a lonely trajectory. Farting and belching are represented as a form of communication or sometimes represent a substitute interlocutor. In *Lo zio di Brooklyn*, Paviglianiti continually repeats the word *certamente* ('certainly') in response to his farts. *Certamente* is an Italian word contrasting with the dialect otherwise used throughout the film, an intercalation in standard Italian like 'of course' in English, which here seems to be a residue from another time, another culture; the farting is a 'reply' that empties it of meaning and ridicules it.

Other examples of 'body language' in *Lo zio di Brooklyn* include the belching that punctuates the speech of the twin Mafia dwarves, and the raspberry-blowing mode of communication of one of the Gemelli brothers, who accompanies these

[124] In *Lo zio di Brooklyn* this fascination is further consolidated by the presence of dwarves, a hunchback and a man with a glass eye.

'sound effects' with continual mimed gestures of the sexual act, expressing his mindless yet relentless sex-drive. All of these can be seen as modes of communication, but are also at times, or at the same time, used as playful devices resembling a musical score.

The absence from Ciprì and Maresco's world of the joy and hilarity that characterise Rabelais' carnival is further highlighted by the isolated placing of bodies in space, in contrast to the shared communal space and continuous exchanging of roles characteristic of Rabelais' carnival. As Mary Russo reminds us, while for Bakhtin the carnivalesque is the antithesis of spectacle, it is also subject to change over time. Russo concludes that 'spectacle assumed a partitioning of space and a creation of discrete sightlines. It broke down the reciprocal roles played by performers and spectators in carnival, as actors became passive spectators or contemplatives involved in increasingly interiorized monodramas' (Russo 1994: 38).

Thanks to their poetics of 'estrangement', inspired by Brecht's theatre, Ciprì and Maresco set about deconstructing the very concept of carnival. We see how the characters seem to be performing for an audience that is both the film's audience in the cinema, whom they directly address, as well as a real or imaginary audience within the filmic space itself. We recall for example the scene at the religious festival in *Lo zio di Brooklyn*, when at a certain point all action ceases and the characters look straight into the camera, as well as the scene in which the prostitute in *Totò che visse due volte* addresses her would-be clients from a balcony to show off her 'female' form. In *Totò che visse due volte* there is always a mocking audience that accompanies and comments on Paletta's misadventures, and we can also count his family as a kind of audience who brutally and continuously point out all his shortcomings. We also find an audience at the end that comments on Paletta's crucifixion with the same pitiless tone as in earlier scenes. The heightening of the

element of spectacle in this representation through the designation of the filmic space as a theatrical space, separated from the audience like a stage, is the defining characteristic of this postmodern carnival. Proposing a re-interpretation of Rabelais as discussed by Bakhtin, it is in part a parody of carnival and its supposed regenerative power while at the same time preserving, thanks to the power of its imagery, its subversive aspects.

2.1.3 The kynical body

The way Ciprì and Maresco use space is a defining characteristic of their poetics, designed as it is to throw into relief the destruction caused by the Second World War and the unrestricted illegal building in its aftermath. They frame space to form the boundaries of the 'stage' creating an apposite backdrop of ruins and abandonment against which the characters perform to an audience, whether visible in the diegesis or forming a sort of theatrical fourth wall.

The way characters move within and inhabit this space of ruins and rubble has led critics to connect Ciprì and Maresco's work with the philosophy of Kynicism. This connection is reinforced by the directors themselves who named their production house 'Cinico Cinema' and, from their very first work on video, defined themselves as 'Kynics' referring to the ancient Greek philosophy, given a modern interpretation by Peter Sloterdijk in *The Critique of Cynical Reason*, a book that had a certain impact in Italy in the early 1990s.

The term *Cynic* derives from the Greek word κύων, *kuôn*, 'dog'. It seems that 'dog' was used as an insult towards the first Cynics, referring to their rejection of conventional manners and their decision to live on the streets. Diogenes, in particular, was referred to as the 'Dog', a distinction he seems to have revelled in, stating that 'I fawn upon those who give me anything and bark at those who give me nothing and

bite the rogues' (Grout Encyclopaedia 2014). Sloterdijk advocates a model based on the 'somatic' anarchism of the Kynic – with a 'k', as he calls them – 'a plebeian outsider inside the walls of the city who challenged state and community through loud satirical laughter and who lived an animalist philosophy of survival and happy refusal' (Sloterdijk 1988: xvii). 'Kynicism' therefore becomes, according to Sloterdijk, a form of resistance against 'Cynicism', the 'pessimistic disillusionment' that characterises postmodernity and supports unprincipled actions.

In *Critique of Cynical Reason*, Sloterdijk explains the difference between 'cynical reason' and 'kynical irony'. Cynical reason is defined as 'enlightened false consciousness'. The Cynic knows his beliefs to be false or ideological, but holds to them nonetheless for the sake of self-protection, as a way to negotiate the contradictory demands placed upon him. In other words, the Cynic recognizes the reality of aesthetic conflict or political contradiction but disavows this contradiction nonetheless. In counter-position to cynical reason is what Sloterdijk calls 'kynical irony', the bold display of truth laid bare. The two are not always distinct as the one follows from the other and both Cynicism and Kynicism are constants in history.

According to Sloterdijk, through the fundamental philosophic practice of Kynicism, there is no division between agent and cause, between theory and practice. In fact, the embodiment of a certain conviction here implies making yourself the medium of that message (which is the opposite of demanding a certain behaviour according to a certain set of moral ideals). And so Diogenes reacts to Plato's doctrine of Ideas by farting and masturbating in public. Diogenes despises fame, has no consideration for architecture, refuses to show respect, parodies tales of Gods and heroes, fraternises with prostitutes, and tells Alexander the Great to stop blocking his sunlight.

This discussion on kynical thought brings us back to carnival; in fact Sloterdijk sees carnival as very close to Kynicism. Sloterdijk writes that for the poor carnival was a sort of surrogate for revolution: a 'fool' king was elected to reign over the revelries in which the usual social mores were overturned, where rich and poor alike had the opportunity to realise their fantasies, leaving reality and social correctness behind. According to Sloterdijk, social institutions would not have survived and could not survive in the long term without occasions such as these (Sloterdijk 1988: 117).

We have seen, however, how the theatrical delimitation of filmic space in Ciprì and Maresco is in contrast with the fluidity that characterises carnival with its continuous exchange of roles and lack of defined boundaries. Though we see men dressed up as women, this type of transvestism[125] cannot be defined in terms of traditional carnival, since the opposite, women dressed up as men, simply does not exist. In fact Ciprì and Maresco's representation of Palermo is more provocative and subversive, making them kynical in accordance with Sloterdijk's definition. Still, though many aspects of it could be seen as a mere reference to the way Diogenes inhabits the *polis*, the expression of Kynicism that their world presents has some significant differences from the ancient form of Kynicism.

Diogenes strolled provocatively far away from the *agora* and was more likely to be met near the cemetery than in more important public places, whereas Ciprì and Maresco's characters, though they are always on the move, follow a circular trajectory, never straying far from 'home'.[126] The actual centre of Palermo, the XIX century part of the city, does not appear in Ciprì and Maresco's films. Instead a

[125] See chapter 2.2.
[126] See chapter 1.1.

symbolic centre is created, revolving around an imaginary space that directly links the narrow streets of the old town to the endless abandoned roads of the outskirts.

The assumption made at the beginning of *Lo zio di Brooklyn* is that an atomic bomb has destroyed Palermo and completely erased the centre of the city itself, creating a new world lived in by the all-male survivors, who seem to be threatened, and governed, only by a primitive and constant fear of unseen gods, and by godlike Mafia bosses.[127] Ciprì and Maresco's characters are placed in dynamic conflict with these surroundings and try to subvert it, but only out of a base instinct to survive, knowing from the outset that they will in any case succumb to a pre-established order where failure and defeat are inevitable. In other words, while the ancient Cynic sees society as divided distinctly into those who obey the rules and those who choose not to, in Ciprì and Maresco's world such a divide does not exist; everybody transgresses the rules not to set an example for others to follow but because they are driven to it by their basic instincts. The most representative example of this is the character of Totò in *Totò che visse due volte*, a Christ-like figure who refuses to perform miracles as he believes that people will in any case not appreciate them.[128]

The references, almost amounting to a parody of Diogenes - his strolling, physical gestures and postures and ways of dressing as well as his rejection of conventional manners, morals and basic decencies - are not, therefore, what in itself makes Ciprì and Maresco Kynics. What is kynical, in Sloterdijk's terms, is their conviction that the role of art is to unmask established conventions and social mores through satirical laughter even though they believe that fundamentally little can be done to change things.

[127] See chapter 3.2.
[128] Eventually, forced to resurrect Lazarus, an enemy of the Mafia boss, he is murdered on the orders of the Mafia boss (also called Totò and played by the same actor) who is enraged at the survival of his enemy.

There is, nevertheless, a subversive nature to Ciprì and Maresco's city-text. The huge bodies are in contrast with accepted canons of beauty and they celebrate and seek abundance notwithstanding their grim existence. They transgress norms of decency but are also always at ease in the spaces they inhabit, whether these are derelict or run down houses or sprawling outskirts littered with rubble. Often shot standing immobile in the landscape, they seem to be a part of it like human statues or pictorial *tableaux.*

What is striking is that, although these bodies form part of a surreal narrative, they also represent aspects of the existence of those living on the margins of society in contemporary Palermo. In accordance with a tradition that started with neorealism, Ciprì and Maresco require their actors to be 'themselves' in their films. The two directors literally picked many of their actors from the streets in Palermo and from the very beginning their work was very much inspired by the life experiences of their actors. [129]

What we can draw from this is that rather than Kynicism, understood as an act of deliberate appropriation of space in opposition to a dominant way of life or ruling power, we see in Ciprì and Maresco's films a spatial representation that recreates how people on the margins of society react to and protect themselves from the ruling power. The work of Michel de Certeau is useful in further developing this concept. The similarities with Sloterdijk's work are striking, though de Certeau comes from a

[129]In July 2002, I spent some days on location during the shooting of Ciprì and Maresco's *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* and had the opportunity to see how the two directors interacted with their actors. The roles of priests, in particular, were given to people with mental or physical disabilities. I remember in particular how the character of one of the priests, Padre Bernardo, was gradually shaped while filming, even though, in contrast to the scripts of the two previous films, the script of *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* was much more detailed. In their conversations with the actor, in which members of the crew or other actors waiting for their scenes also participated, both directors put the actor at ease by asking him to tell them funny stories about his life, to sing songs, etc., and parts of this telling and singing then became incorporated into the actor's lines.

different perspective and field of research.[130] In his *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1988), de Certeau focuses on the way people living on the margins in a city environment resist the normative order imposed by society. De Certeau defines people on the margins as 'disadvantaged', making the point that 'marginality is today no longer limited to minority groups, but is rather massive and pervasive', so that a marginal group has now become a silent majority (de Certeau 1988: XVIII).

De Certeau writes that in the 'terrain imposed' the disadvantaged must use alternative tactics in order to protect themselves. He draws a distinction between strategies employed by those in power, who 'postulate their proper place from which to manage and dominate the world around,' and subversive tactics that those without power must use to calculate their actions in a space that is not their own, organised by laws and rules they did not create. For de Certeau 'strategy' is 'the calculus of force-relationships that becomes possible when a subject of will and power […] can be isolated from an "environment"' (ibid: XIX); while a 'tactic' is 'a calculus that cannot count on a "proper" (a spatial or institutional localization), nor thus on a border-line distinguishing the other as a visible totality' (ibid). This means that the 'weak' 'must continually turn to their own ends forces alien to them' (ibid). To explain this relationship, de Certeau refers to Greek philosophy, focusing however not on the Kynics but on the Sophists, who, according to him, had a 'privileged place as far as tactics are concerned' (ibid: XX). Mentioning the rhetorician Corax, de Certeau says that the Sophists' principle was 'to make the weaker position seem the stronger', as they claimed 'to have the power of turning the tables on the powerful by the way in which they made use of the opportunities offered by the particular situation' (ibid). This 'turning the tables' characterises Ciprì and Maresco's city-text, where excess is

[130] Sloterdijk's work is written from a philosophical perspective while de Certeau's is more focused on the psychoanalytical.

expressed in the representation of bodies that are not detached from the real world, but on the contrary are modelled on it. It is the world of a 'silent majority' rendered visible through Ciprì and Maresco's minimalist style of estrangement.

2.2 An All-Male World

Ciprì and Maresco's cinema proposes a funereal carnival set in a claustrophobic world where rigidly divided interpersonal relationships, from family nuclei to relationships with the other sex, are one of the main causes of anguish. However hyperbolic the representation is, featuring paradoxical and surreal situations, we can nonetheless identify characteristics of the typical Italian family as it has evolved after the Second World War, with 'a very strong overlay between family and economic activity' and a 'strong reassertion of traditional proximities between individual family members' (Ginsborg 2001: 75). The relationships between men and women (played by men) bear the imprint of a certain type of masculinity and femininity and are explored in a way that above all aims to provoke the viewer. Albeit within the context of a misogynistic all-male world, women nonetheless assume a central role, since it is the mother figure, pivotal within the traditional Italian family nucleus, that predominates.

The first part of this section looks at how this macho culture is represented from a sociological and anthropological perspective, with very limited family units, from which the father is mostly absent and in many instances comprising solely a mother (played by a man) and an adult son. The second part deals with the uneasiness of these relationships, leading to the constant need for sons to affirm their primacy as macho men. Finally, the third part reviews Ciprì and Maresco's films from a psychoanalytical perspective. Drawing on Kaja Silverman's *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (1992a), it discusses how their aggressive, 'bestial' representation of masculinity has strong elements of identification with the feminine, expressed through a desperate longing.

2.2.1 Mothers and sons

In the opening scenes of Pietro Germi's *Divorzio all'italiana / Divorce, Italian Style* (1961), a film set in 1960s Sicily, the suffocating heat that confines people indoors resting, waiting for the cool of the evening, is a metaphor for a stifling unchanging social environment. We follow the story of a Sicilian nobleman, played by Marcello Mastroianni, who wants to remarry and, since there was no divorce law in Italy at the time, he tries to do everything possible to encourage his wife to have an affair so that he can catch her *in flagrante* and 'justifiably' murder her using the so-called 'honour killing' defence. The satirical target of the story is a male-dominated world controlled by values such as family honour, which still exerted significant influence in 1960s Italy. The honour killing defence, Article 587 of the Italian Penal Code known as *Codice Rocco*, in force in Italy until 1981, provided that 'those who killed their wife, daughter or sister in order to defend their honor and the honor of their family should be given a reduced sentence' (Cafaro 2012: 10). Only available to men, this defence was almost exclusively used by husbands who claimed that their wives had dishonoured the family by having sex outside marriage. Divorce in Italy was introduced in 1970 in certain restricted circumstances (Clark 1986: 381) but before then Church marriages could only be declared 'invalid' by the Vatican 'on certain grounds' (ibid). The 1970 law was initially attacked by various political parties and religious organisations and it was not until 1974, following a referendum on whether to keep the new law or repeal it, that the law finally came into force. The very existence of the *Codice Rocco* is a telling fact about a society that regarded women as a commodity and the property of the men in their family (ibid: 11).

In the years following the unification of the country (1861), women were less educated than men (Clark 1986: 33). Sicilian novelists, like Giovanni Verga and

'folklorists' like Giuseppe Pitrè, 'depicted a rigid patriarchal society preoccupied by honour and sexual fidelity' (ibid). Martin Clark adds that this reality could have been true in part of Sicily, but was not necessarily so elsewhere in Italy, even in the South. Still, the anecdotal evidence provided by Clark about other regions of Italy would seem to contradict this. Clark, for instance, reveals that the Prefect of Bari, from the Puglia region, reported that 'an ass, an ox, a sheep, are almost always worth more than a wife to the peasant, and the wife obeys her husband like a slave' (ibid: 33). Even in the 1970s, after the introduction of the divorce law, the heightened profile achieved by Italian feminists, and in a period in which the number of female graduates increased considerably (ibid: 380-381), it was still hard to overcome certain prejudices. As Clark says, a survey of Italian women in 1972 showed that, although women started to see a job away from the house and 'freedom to think and act as they liked' as their priorities, of the married women interviewed only 10% reported that their husband regularly helped with the housework, and only 16% thought he should do so (ibid).

However dominant men are in traditional Italian culture, we cannot assume that women have been completely subjugated. Indeed, in Italy a strong matriarchal culture has always played a key role as far as morals and standards of behaviour are concerned. This matriarchal role is recognised by Leonardo Sciascia, even though he attributes negative connotations to it, defining the old Sicilian matriarchal system as a collection of abhorrent values that pushed men towards the worst kind of behaviour, since they were judged above all according to their earning capacity (Sciascia 1997: 13). In contrast, a positive view of the Sicilian matriarchal system is proposed in Elio Vittorini's novel *Conversazione in Sicilia* (1941, 1999).[131] In the novel, the protagonist Silvestro returns to Sicily after a long absence when he receives a letter

[131] Published in English as *Conversations in Sicily* (2003).

from his father informing him that he has left Silvestro's mother for another woman. Even though the father, an artistic free-spirited man, is central to the memories of the son, it is the mother who emerges as the stronger character and for whom the adult son learns a new respect. The father turns out to be a weak, cowardly and fundamentally egotistical individual, while the mother is revealed as an individual with strength of character, capable of deep feelings, and acts as Silvestro's guide in his rediscovery of his Sicilian roots.

In a study on the Neapolitan family, Anne Parson (1962: 416-452) distinguished three different types of matriarchy: 'pure matriarchy' in which the weakness of the father determines the power of the mother; 'moderate matriarchy' in which the mother is in control but the formal primacy of the father is acknowledged; and 'mother-centred' where the father has the power but the mother is the emotional fulcrum of the family. However, these types of family, even where the mother has a dominant role, are characterised by the aggressive nature often displayed by the man towards his wife and children, violence used as a way of affirming masculinity, to claim primacy when the man senses himself under threat.

Although family groupings in Ciprì and Maresco appear at first sight to be part of an untypical all-male world, aspects of this representation very much reflect common family trends in contemporary Italy. A comparison with the films of Nanni Moretti again proves useful.[132] Even though Moretti's films focus on an educated middle class while Ciprì and Maresco's deal with an uneducated sub-proletariat, both Moretti and Ciprì and Maresco reflect on changes in contemporary Italian society, such as the shift to a nuclear family model and the crisis of masculinity. In their study of Nanni Moretti's cinema, Ewa Mazierska and Laura Rascaroli (2004) discuss the role of the family and the crisis of masculinity in contemporary Italy. What emerges

[132] See chapter 1.1.

from their work is that Italian families are still a strong cohesive force in society and this makes Italy the Western European country with the greatest inter-generational solidarity (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2004: 47). In the 1990s, Italy was however also the country with the lowest birth rate in the world, while once it had one of the highest in Europe (Ginsborg 2001: 69). Thus, there seems to be a contradiction between the strength of the family unit on the one hand and its ever-reducing size on the other.[133] Mazierska and Rascaroli discuss all these implications and their internal dynamics in relation to the films of Moretti, in which single child families often appear and in one episode of *Caro Diario / Dear Diary* (1993), 'Isole' ('Islands'), the main theme is families with one child.[134]

Contrary to what is commonly thought, the low birth rate in Italy is also an issue in the South. This contrasts sharply, therefore, with the many representations of the South in which large families predominate, a reality that became less and less prevalent after the economic miracle of the 1950s/1960s. Luchino Visconti's *Rocco e i suoi fratelli / Rocco and his brothers* (1960) represents this typical image in a story about a tyrannical and possessive mother and her seven sons who move from a little village in the South to Milan, where, in a rapidly changing environment, they encounter a very different kind of life to the one they have left behind.

The type of family featured in Ciprì and Maresco has become the most common, both in the South and in the North of the country, with two or, more recently, only one child. Their family units are also characterised by inter-

[133] According to the data gathered by Paul Ginsborg, 'in 1970, the average number of children per woman in Italy was 2.42, around the norm for the European Community; by 1980 it was 1.64; by 1990 1.30, and by 1993 1.21 (Ginsborg 2001: 69). The reasons for these changing trends are manifold, including increased female emancipation that led to women giving greater importance to their careers as well as higher levels of unemployment, or at least a precarious employment situation that led to young couples getting married later and living for longer in the family home (Ginsborg 2001: 68-93).

[134] The film consists of three chapters of a diary. In the second episode Moretti travels by ferry through the Aeolian Islands, first stopping at Lipari where he visits a friend. Then, unable to find the tranquility he desires, accompanied by his friend, he moves on to Salina Island. The two are welcomed by a couple that seem incapable of managing the education of an extremely over-indulged child (indeed the entire island seems to be under the rule of children).

generational solidarity, becoming a mirror of what Ginsborg describes as grandparents, parents and children often living 'close together and in daily contact one with the other' (Ginsborg 2001: 74). It is a 'long' and 'thin' family, 'long in the sense of adult children staying longer at home, thin because of declining fertility rates' (ibid). The narrative of *Lo zio di Brooklyn* largely revolves around three generations of the same family, the Gemelli family, who live together, comprising a father, three sons and one grown-up grandson. It is a situation that, as Ginsborg writes, produces 'particular qualities of spatial and emotional proximity' (ibid), the positive effects of which, such as solidarity, can still be observed in the Gemelli family. However, in the Gemelli family itself and the other family units represented in *Lo zio di Brooklyn* - a singer and a charlatan magician who live with their respective mothers -[135] we are mainly shown the negative influences of this proximity. In the mother-son family units, the mothers are played by old men and are shown as odious, cantankerous and obsessive, but while the singer's mother is depicted as tough and masculine, smoking cigars and often seen cruelly deriding her son as a failure, the magician's mother, in contrast, depends entirely on her son and is depicted as senile and unable to control her bodily functions, while the son despises and mistreats her.

This mother-son nucleus appears again in *Totò che visse due volte*, where Paletta's mother resembles the singer's mother since she derides and mistreats him, constantly telling him he is 'just like his father', who we assume is either dead or has left her.[136] The magician's family resembles that of Pitrinu and Bastiano in *Totò che visse due volte*, even though in *Totò* the mother figure, while shown as ingenuous and impractical, is treated with greater kindness and respect. In this episode there are two

[135] Zoras sells potions to the singer to help him become famous and at the same time to get away from his mother.
[136] In this family context we see Paletta's mother living with another husband who completely ignores Paletta and is focused entirely on consuming the food on his plate.

sons who are very different from one another: the first weak and romantic (reminding us of the singer) and the second an aggressive surrogate father figure (recalling the magician). In *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* the La Marca family comprises only the two brothers while the family nucleus of the Cardinal consists solely of a son and mother, whose relationship has many aspects in common with that of the magician and his mother. In this case the mother cannot restrain her farts and never wants to leave her son's side, while he constantly and openly derides her [Figure 11].

Figure 11: Cardinal Sucato and his mother (both seated)

As we can see, these are very small family units, in many instances consisting solely of a mother and son and from which the father is mostly absent, though occasionally substituted by surrogates from within the family. In *Lo zio di Brooklyn*, the grandfather acts as father to two generations while in the Pitrinu and Fefè episode in *Totò che visse due volte* one of the brothers takes on the paternal role. There are, undoubtedly, substantial differences between the world of Moretti and that of Ciprì and Maresco; where they diverge is in their respective attitudes to family closeness, or an unwillingness to break away from the nuclear family and grow up. Moretti acknowledges that it is unhealthy but his characters are nonetheless accepting of it

because of the sense of security it brings (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2004: 80).[137] In contrast, in Ciprì and Maresco, family closeness is depicted as an unpleasant necessity in which the emotional barrier between the generations cannot be breached. An exception to this prevailing view is provided in the relationship between the grandfather and the paralysed grandson in *Lo zio di Brooklyn*, the only relationship based on mutual affection in which a man, the grandfather, plays an almost maternal role, uniquely in this instance a positive one, cooking for and looking after his grandson.

2.2.2 The myth of the 'cockerel man'

As we have seen, there are two types of mother/son relationship in Ciprì and Maresco, where the sons are either subjugated and resentful towards their mothers or, reacting to their mothers' possessiveness, they are dominant and aggressive. In the latter case there is a reversing of roles, with the mother portrayed as a childish hopeless woman who is constantly rebuked by a paternal, almost tyrannical, son. While Moretti's films express a 'beauty and meaning to being an adult with a childish soul' (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2004: 80), in Ciprì and Maresco this infantilising never produces positive effects but generates uncomfortable situations with sons who feel oppressed by their mothers.

It is the uneasiness of this type of relationship that leads to a constant need for the son to assert his primacy against a mother who poses a continuous threat to his self-image as a strong and independent man. For some of the characters, who seem resigned to their 'fate', this becomes an insurmountable burden, while in others it

[137] Mazierska and Rascaroli highlight how Moretti derides this trend although it is also self-ironic as Moretti himself lived with his parents until he was 29 and returned to live with them for some spells afterwards (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2004: 49).

causes anger and resentment towards their mothers and they react by ridiculing and deriding her.[138]

This primacy, however, is above all sought by the men through the constant need to show how well they perform sexually and in their obsessive search for a 'woman'. One of the main elements of the apocalyptic world created by Ciprì and Maresco is that women - played by men dressed up us women - are rare.[139] And if in the case of the lonely *flâneur* cyclist of *Lo zio di Brooklyn*[140] this quest almost assumes existentialist aspects, for all the other characters women are mainly an obsession, a sought after commodity.

The obsession with sex, which is represented through group masturbation and frequent visits to the brothel, becomes so extreme as to clearly form a parody of a society in which men are under constant pressure to perform sexually. We can define this type of masculinity using Sciascia's analogy of the cockerel. Sciascia notes that in the peasant world the cockerel represents the animal with the most perfect sexuality, 'easily aroused, insatiable and capable of amply satisfying all the sexual demands made of it' (Sciascia, 1997: 42). It is a model of sexuality that Sciascia suggests leads inevitably, in its 'athletic short-livedness', to 'an unfulfilled sexuality that must be displaced as a result to the level of fantasy' (ibid: 42). This concept, which embodies 'the ideal of man whose masculinity is determined by his multiple experiences with women' (Reich 2004: 54), is reflected in the Italian word *gallismo*, which derives from *gallo*, cockerel, and is usually translated into English as 'machismo' though, for example in the Italian dictionary Devoto–Oli (1990: 800), it implies more a 'satirical denomination for male vanity or a presumed unfailing ability

[138] The case of the singer in *Lo zio di Brooklyn* and Paletta in *Totò che visse due volte* are examples of the former and the magician in *Lo zio di Brooklyn* and Cardinal Sucato in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* are examples of the latter.
[139] Characters in *Lo zio di Brooklyn* lament their absence and set themselves the task of 'finding one'.
[140] See chapter 1.1.3.

to perform sexually, symbolised by the cockerel'. The conceptualisation of *gallismo* is attributed to the Sicilian writer Vitaliano Brancati (1907-1954), who had a certain influence on Sciascia himself. As Jacqueline Reich writes in her *Beyond the Latin Lover: Marcello Mastroianni. Masculinity, and Italian Cinema* (2004), the 'Sicilian male', in order to combat potential threats to his masculinity, 'makes recourse to another essential aspect of his identity to exert his manliness: sexual prowess' (Reich 2004: 54). Yet, adds Reich, this manifestation is 'more a discourse than an actual trait' (ibid).

Brancati wrote on the subject in an essay published in 1946, *I piaceri del gallismo* ('The Pleasures of Gallismo'), and dealt with this matter in his novels *Don Giovanni in Sicilia* (1941), adapted for the screen by Alberto Lattuada in 1967, [141] and *Il bell'Antonio* (1949), adapted for the screen by Mauro Bolognini in 1960. [142] Reich points out how, according to Brancati, the pride that in Southern towns seems to characterise the 'male face' does not derive from the man being 'good, truthful, generous, honest, tame, just, charitable, etc., but rather feeling or imagining himself to be "talented in matters of love"' (ibid). All of this, concludes Reich, quoting Sciascia, leads to the fact that being *gallo* means mainly receiving recognition and respect for being a great lover and, more than sexual exploits, what really matters is the 'talking about women' (ibid).

This model has inexorably shown its fragility, the unstable nature of a 'gender construction' based traditionally 'on the tendentious preservation of female chastity, the archaic code of honour, and talking about sex rather than sexual action' (ibid). It is a model of masculinity that rose to its peak in Italy during Fascism, which based its

[141] *Don Giovanni in Sicilia / Don Juan in Sicily* is the story of Giovanni Percolla, a reputed womaniser who, in his forties, still lives with his three unmarried sisters who want him to get married. Once married, his beliefs about women collapse.

[142] *Il Bell'Antonio* is the story of a handsome young man from Catania, a reputed womaniser, who marries a beautiful girl from the same town. After one year of marriage she seeks annulment of the marriage on the grounds that he is impotent.

ideology on the image of 'men seen as virile soldiers, workers, husbands and fathers' (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2004: 57). The fall of Fascism led to a masculine identity crisis compounded by factors such as the radical redefinition of working life due to a rapid industrialisation 'that brought the men to the factories, encouraged urbanisation and emigration and broke the traditional link between man and earth' (ibid). In addition we should also factor in the consequent increasing numbers of working women, and the exposure to new models of masculinity through the re-introduction of American films. American films had been banned during the fascist period and the liberated social mores and especially the emancipated female characters that they portrayed had a great impact on Italian post-war society.

This identity crisis has also provoked a reaction against the traditional father figure who embodied the myth of *gallismo*. As the father figure increasingly came to be viewed as the source of all kinds of repressive and oppressive power, a society without fathers was mooted in the political protests and upheavals of 1968.[143] Many Italian directors have dealt with 'the diminishing of fathers' (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2004: 57) as well as the rejection of the father figure itself, including Bernardo Bertolucci, who, according to Alessandro Marini, frequently proposes a kind of 'symbolic parricide' (Marini 2012: 94). In Bertolucci's *Il Conformista / The Conformist* (1970),[144] not only fathers who were involved in and supported Fascism are shown in a negative light but also those who opposed it, such as the dissident left-wing professor that the protagonist kills despite having been one of his own University professors.

[143] As discussed in an influential book of the time by Gérard Mendel: *La Révolte contre le père* ('The revolt against the father') (1968).

[144] The film is initially set before the start of the Second World War, when Marcello Clerici, a spy for the fascist political police is on his honeymoon in Paris. The honeymoon is a cover and Marcello, unbeknownst to his wife, has been assigned the assassination of his ex professor who has become a dissident antifascist activist.

The absence of fathers is a core characteristic of Ciprì and Maresco's films, which, as we have seen, very much revolve around the mother/son nucleus. While in Moretti men, albeit conflictually, come to terms with the challenges of masculinity by taking on more maternal roles, like the fathers in the abovementioned episode of *Caro diario*, in Ciprì and Maresco the aggressive side of masculinity is accentuated almost to the point of caricature.

This type of masculinity is displayed within the family by continuous arguments, a key example being the second episode in *Totò che visse due volte*, where Bastiano, Pitrinu's brother, publicly derides and physically attacks his brother's homosexual lover, Fefè, when the latter attends Pitrinu's funeral vigil [Figure 12]. In a flashback, Bastiano leads a group of men on a 'punitive mission' to seek out Pitrinu and Fefè. He is the most aggressive of the group, removing his belt to beat the two lovers, mirroring the traditional father-delivered punishment as an affirmation of his authority and his own 'undoubted' masculinity.

Figure 12: Fefè (right standing) at Pitrinu's funeral vigil, confronted by Bastiano (left)

The symbolism of this sequence is effectively rendered through alternate shots. There is a stark contrast between the shots of the brother and the men following him, who

are all big beefy men, as they rush up the hill to where Pitrinu and Fefè are hiding, and the shots of Pitrinu and Fefè who address each other in flowery poetic language as if imagining themselves to be in one of the romantic films of the immediate post-war period.[145]

The shots of Bastiano and his gang are in mid-shot from the waist up, their bodies filling the screen and emphasising their aggression and the physical threat they represent. When they find Pitrinu and Fefè, Bastiano's gang hangs back and he advances alone, crudely deriding and berating his brother and his brother's lover for having brought dishonour on the family and inciting the others to join in with his tirade. The group of men thus initially forms an audience to the event, with Fefè and Pitrinu moving as if on a stage, continuing to speak in their highly refined and affected manner, which contrasts starkly with the crude gestures and gruff guttural sounds of the dialect spoken by Bastiano and the others.

The emphatically aggressive masculinity in these scenes recalls films by other contemporary Italian directors, such as Roberta Torre, who has worked closely with Ciprì and Maresco. In Torre's *Tano da morire / To Die for Tano* (1997),[146] patriarchy is continuously ridiculed and seen as a burden for the men themselves. They are depicted as violent and aggressive, eager to perform according to traditional macho stereotypes whereas, although the women might seem to be 'victims', in fact they manage to make the rules work to their own benefit. Mario Martone also deals with the aggressive nature of this male-centric culture in his *L'amore molesto* / *Nasty Love* (1995), in which he seeks to redefine the woman's role through emancipation from patriarchy. In *L'amore molesto*, Amalia, the mother of the protagonist, Delia, is a passionate woman who is determined to affirm her femininity even in later life and in

[145] Aspects of the use of this type of language are analysed in chapter 3.3.
[146] See chapters 1.2.2 and 3.3.3.

spite of the jealous rage of her husband. It is also thanks to Amalia's determination that Delia, in the end, finds herself freed from her father's demands and whims. Here, too, we experience endless fighting with men who have recourse to violence to affirm their status often creating a camaraderie that unites them, almost as if they realise they are in the wrong and need the support of other like-minded men. It is a camaraderie that embodies the culture of *gallismo* which, for example in *L'amore molesto*, leads to Amalia's brother remaining friends with her ex-husband, despite the suffering he had inflicted on Amalia and their daughters.

Linked to this discussion is Paolo and Vittorio Taviani's 1977 film *Padre Padrone / Father and Master*, based on Gavino Ledda's autobiographical novel *Padre Padrone* (1975). The film is set in post-war Sardinia and portrays a strong authoritarian relationship between a father, an illiterate shepherd, and his son, Gavino. The film centres on the life story of Gavino, who, against his father's will, decides to become a writer. The Tavianis' film deals with the conflicts faced by Italian society in its transformation from a rural to an industrialised country. The moment in which the father, 'a perfect image of the primal father of psychoanalysis' (Bondanella 2009: 343), enters his son's classroom to take him away from school to work in the fields, terrifying the children with the threat that one day their fate will be the same as his son's, is evocative of some of the situations in Ciprì and Maresco's films, with the significant difference that in Ciprì and Maresco the tyrannical role is mostly played by mothers.[147]

An aspect of the primal masculinity portrayed in the Taviani Brothers' *Padre Padrone* is the depiction of sex as an almost bestial act. Bondanella says of the protagonist that 'he assimilates the language of sex by observing the animals about

[147] Such as the scene, in *Lo zio di Brooklyn*, in which the singer's mother tells her son he is a failure and wants him to give up or when Paletta's mother, in *Totò che visse due volte*, says that Paletta is good for nothing and will end up being a failure like his father.

him coupling (or his fellow shepherds coupling with them)' (Bondanella 2009: 344). It is an aspect that resonates with the characters in Ciprì and Maresco, in which animals also become sexual objects, for instance in the opening scenes of *Lo zio di Brooklyn* one of the characters pays the owner of a donkey for allowing him to have sex with it, and in the last episode of the same film a hen is the object of the idiot figure's desire. Together with the constant search for food [148] and the Mafiosi's obsession with revenge,[149] satisfying their basic sexual needs is the principal concern of the men in *Lo zio di Brooklyn* and *Totò che visse due volte* and it is these events that move the narrative along.

Representations of *gallismo* abound in post-war Italian cinema. Giacomo Manzoli (2014) has identified distinct categories, highlighting how the crisis of masculinity represented in this period contrasts with the image of the self-confident male associated with Italian cinema in general but mostly evident in the films of the fascist period, interpreted by actors such as Amedeo Nazzari and Massimo Girotti. The first of these categories he eloquently calls, quoting Reich, *l'incapace*, the 'incapable', most emblematically represented by the characters played by Marcello Mastroianni, who are sexually inept just as they are inept in life (Manzoli 2014: 15) - for example Mastroianni's role in *Divorzio all'Italiana*, discussed earlier, and his roles in Fellini's films in which the male protagonists seem capable of little more than fantasising about the female bodies that 'circle around them as if on a carousel' (ibid). Another category identified by Manzoli is the *nostalgico regressivo*, 'regressive nostalgic', illustrated with reference to the abovementioned Alberto Lattuada's *Don Giovanni in Sicilia*, which centres on the myth of the Latin lover. The protagonist is cosseted by the attentions of three 'sister-mothers' and, oppressed by the need to

[148] See chapter 2.3.
[149] See chapter 3.2.

sexually perform, he develops a predatory form of sexuality (ibid: 18). What the film seems to suggest is that to be liberated from this form of oppression it is necessary to exercise self-denial and, as happens in the film, to reject one's environment and culture (ibid: 19).

The main difference between Ciprì and Maresco's films and the films discussed by Manzoli is that in Ciprì and Maresco the crisis of masculinity is regarded harshly without indulgence, while in the films considered by Manzoli, although a critical eye is not entirely absent, there is an element of compassion. The image that emerges is of a 'sensitive' and 'understanding' emancipated man. In stark contrast to this, the men that Ciprì and Maresco portray are extreme expressions of a culture in which, as they say, 'at a certain point the women got up and left the men to talk' (Valentini 1999: 22) and are an undeniable product of what Ciprì and Maresco define as 'sexual mis-education' (ibid).

Examples of this type of representation can also be found in Italian American cinema, from which Ciprì and Maresco have drawn inspiration, in particular from the macho culture portrayed in the work of Martin Scorsese, himself of Sicilian origin (Morreale 2003: 11). This culture is in evidence in the most Sicilian of Scorsese's films, *Raging Bull* (1980), based on Jake La Motta's autobiography, which chronicles the boxer's rise and tragic fall. The film - which features a soundtrack based on the overture of Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana*, evocative of 'rustic' Sicily - represents a certain type of macho culture and value system that are mostly typical of the Italian South. Aiming at a realistic portrait of the Italian American community, the film is filled with elements of first generation culture, including the use of Sicilian dialect peppered with strong language. In Scorsese men are often violent towards women but

here the 'negative' female figure is the wife, while in Ciprì and Maresco wives are mostly absent and the negative female figure is the mother.[150]

2.2.3 Longing for the feminine

In *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (1992a), Kaja Silverman sees the contemporary age as suffering from a profound sense of 'ideological fatigue', caused by the male's inability to recognise himself within projected ideals of masculinity. This has led to a decline in the appeal of traditional masculinity, generating a longing for the feminine. However, the heterosexual male psyche does not seem to have changed, with the 'phallus still being a privileged signifier' (Silverman 1992a: 16). Following on from this, perversions, according to Silverman, subvert the traditional binary oppositions upon which the social order rests and male/female, active/passive categorisations become unstable (ibid: 187). Silverman's analysis is pertinent to this discussion since the different types of male subjectivity that she identifies are based upon forms of identification with the 'feminine'. Notwithstanding their representation of an aggressive, 'bestial' masculinity, which could be construed as 'the alignment of the penis with the phallus',[151] Ciprì and Maresco's world contains significant elements of identification with the feminine, expressed both through a desperate longing and the extensive use of transvestism. An irresistible urge towards the feminine characterises *Totò che visse due volte*, where the idiot figure rubs himself up against a statue of Saint Rosalia, showing the same desperate drive as in the sequence of the rape of the angel, in which the angel is violated by brutal gross men.[152] As far as transvestism is concerned, cross-dressing is a fundamental feature of Ciprì and Maresco's cinema and they are unique in Italy for having men play all the female roles in their films. It is

[150] The influence of Scorsese on Ciprì and Maresco is also discussed in chapter 3.2.
[151] As exemplified by the myth of the 'cockerel man'.
[152] See also chapter 1.2.2.

something that Maresco has likened to the practice in Shakespeare's time, though there is also an inspirational contemporary Italian example in the theatre of Paolo Poli. [153]

In an analysis of Laura Mulvey's seminal essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' (1992), Silverman's *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* attempts both to distinguish the 'look' from the 'gaze' and to establish the possibility of identification with or objectification of any subject in the field of vision. Certain aspects of cinema viewing, according to Mulvey, facilitate for the spectator both the narcissistic process of identification with an 'ideal ego' seen on the screen and the voyeuristic process of objectification of female characters. Mulvey maintains that in a patriarchal society 'pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female' (Mulvey 1992: 751) and goes on to observe that Hollywood films largely focus on a male protagonist and assume a male spectator. 'As the spectator identifies with the main male protagonist, he projects his look onto that of his like, his screen surrogate, so that the power of the male protagonist, as he controls events, coincides with the active power of the erotic look, both giving a satisfying sense of omnipotence' (ibid). Thus, according to Mulvey, mainstream films present men as active masterful subjects and treat women as passive objects of desire for the men in the story and in the audience, not permitting women to be desiring sexual subjects in their own right. Silverman, on the other hand, objects to the traditional associations of passive/feminine and active/masculine. She argues that the gaze can be adopted by both men and women and the controlling subject is not always male nor is the passive object always female. According to Silverman, the gaze is 'inapprehensible' and 'unlocatable', it is

[153] Born in 1929, Paolo Poli proposes theatrical performances characterised by a mixed use of arts and genres with surreal and oniric connotations. It is a kind of theatre that is openly inspired by sacred mediaeval representations, Elizabethan theatre and the *Commedia dell'Arte* as well as the oriental tradition in which the actor plays at the same time both the male and the female roles. Among his works is *Rita da Cascia* (1966), an irreverent portrait of Saint Rita that at the time provoked much controversy and even parliamentary debate.

the registering of Otherness within the field of vision and since each of us, whether male or female, can be a subject only in relation to the Other, we are all equally dependent upon the gaze (Silverman 1992b: 37).

Silverman draws on Jacques Lacan to distinguish between two kinds of identification: the first consolidates the ego, and hence constitutes and reinforces the boundaries 'separating male subjects from female, white subjects from black, heterosexual subjects from homosexual,' while the second works to dismantle the ego, and hence to erase those same boundaries (ibid: 32). Notwithstanding that, in Ciprì and Maresco the 'cockerel' model of sexual relations apparently seems to predominate as 'identification which consolidates the ego', on closer inspection we can see that there is a continuous vacillation between sexual and gender orientation principally achieved by the extensive use of transvestism and playing with gender characteristics. This ties in with what Silverman claims about the strong tendency in psychoanalysis to speak of the mother and the father as if they were stable and knowable objects, recognisable from one child to another, while instead what constitutes the mother or the father for a given subject is a 'heterogeneous host of memories' (ibid). This concept is critical in going beyond rigidly defined opposites such as strong/weak, active/passive as applied to relations between the masculine and the feminine since any one of those memories can be the starting point for displacement (ibid). According to Silverman the parental figures are unstable, shifting over time and perceived as different from one subject to another.[154]

[154] The 'subject' and the 'self' are seen as two very different concepts. The self or the ego is what Jean Laplanche calls 'an object masquerading as a subject.' It is an object because it is one of the things we can love, one of the things in which we can invest our libido. This object is able to masquerade as a subject because it is what provides us with our sense of identity, and for most of us identity equals subjectivity. But identity is foundationally fictive; it is predicated on our (mis)recognition of ourselves first within our mirror reflection, and then within countless other human and representational 'imagoes'. This fiction is impossible to sustain in any continuous way, but the subject classically clings to it anyway. (Silverman 1992b: 36)

Following on from this, we can say that in Ciprì and Maresco women are represented as strong and despotic, closer to Sciascia's model of Sicilian matriarchy, or purely as an object of desire perversely projected onto animals or inanimate objects such as a statue. What we witness is a subverting of the basic assumptions of cinema on which Mulvey based her theories, namely that the object of desire, or rather the bodies 'worthy of libidinal affirmation' within the narrative, are either men or women whose attractiveness matches the audience's expectations. The object of desire, the subject gazed upon by the characters, is, in Ciprì and Maresco, a most unlikely object of desire for an average public, whether heterosexual or homosexual: for instance a dwarf or a man with a glass eye, who repeatedly removes and replaces it, both of whom are cast as female objects of desire for the other characters who are themselves far removed from traditional canons of beauty. What Ciprì and Maresco seem to be aiming at is to confuse both our sense of what can be considered beautiful and our established notions of masculinity and femininity.

Ciprì and Maresco use traditional strategies to control the gaze, as exemplified in the sequence with the prostitute Tremmotori [Figure 13], which is shot from below looking up from the subjective view of her admirers as she touches her false prominent breasts on the balcony.

Figure 13: Tremmotori on her balcony

The two directors also re-create, in the opening scenes of *Toto' che visse due volte*, the conditions that, according to Mulvey, enable the spectator to establish the gaze.[155] We see some of the characters from *Lo zio di Brooklyn* in a cinema watching the sequence from *Lo zio di Brooklyn* of the man having sex with a donkey. The theatrical expedient of an audience that observes the action, which serves to further highlight the nature of the predominant gaze, is used in the sequence with Tremmotori and we find it as well in the sequence of the rape of the angel. In the rape sequence the subject converts from voyeur to participant while in the sequence in the cinema the inverse occurs, i.e. participants in *Lo zio di Brooklyn* become voyeurs in *Totò che visse due volte*. In the rape sequence the idiot figure is in a corner masturbating while he observes the rape but is then forced to abandon his voyeuristic stance and become a participant. This process, allied to the use of deconstruction techniques such as extreme close ups of the large menacing forms of the rapists and slow motion, serves to annul the established voyeuristic 'peeping' audience position, drawing the viewer

[155] […] 'the extreme contrast between the darkness in the auditorium (which also isolates the spectators from one another) and the brilliance of the shifting patterns of light and shade on the screen helps to promote the illusion of voyeuristic separation. Although the film is really being shown, is there to be seen, conditions of screening and narrative conventions give the spectator an illusion of looking in on a private world.' (Mulvey 1992: 749)

directly into the action via their on-screen double, the idiot figure, and thus magnifying the impact of the violence shown in the scene.[156]

The extreme close ups, and their repetition, do not establish what Robert Stam, through his reading of Bakhtin, defines as 'pornographic' (Stam 1992: 167). In Bakhtinian terms, pornography is 'monologic' as 'it subordinates everything to the masculine imagination' (ibid), leading to frequent close ups of genitals and repetition of the same shots, 'of what Luce Iragaray calls "the law of the same"' (ibid 178). Film techniques are used, instead, in the sequence of the rape of the angel to highlight sex as an anguished obsession, violence that has become 'obvious and constant', with facial expressions that reveal 'a depraved sexuality which collides with the sacred each dragging the other down' (Fornara 1999b: 148).

Still, there are also sequences that can be defined as pornographic, in the sense that they express the fantasies and perversions of the characters in the film. To Bruno Fornara's statement that in Ciprì and Maresco 'men have created gods in their own image' (ibid: 149), we could add that Ciprì and Maresco's men have invented their own particular pornography as well. Emblematic of this is the sequence of the man having sex with a donkey in *Lo zio di Brooklyn*, which in *Totò che visse due volte* becomes a sequence in a film watched by the characters in the cinema. What we see in this sequence, in contrast to the rape of the angel, is that the man enjoys having sex, and the sequence indulges in the showing of the sexual act. Furthermore, the character's use of the phrase '*che bello*' ('that's good'), as in the Fefè and Pitrinu episode, departs from the use of dialect and is reminiscent here of typical expressions used in Italian pornographic films.[157]

[156] See also chapter 1.2.2.
[157] See chapter 1.3.1.

Stam's reference to Bakhtin is helpful in relation to other aspects of our discussion on the feminine. Stam points out how it has been noted that 'Bakhtin, like Rabelais, addresses himself largely to men, assuming an exclusively male audience' (Stam 1992: 162). He adds, for instance, that, according to Booth 'Rabelais never even tries to imagine a woman's point of view or to incorporate women into a dialogue [and that] nowhere in Bakhtin does one discover any suggestion that he [Bakhtin] sees the importance of this kind of dialogue, not even when he discusses Rabelais' attitude toward women' (ibid). However, Stam suggests that rather than giving greater importance to 'sexual difference *between* bodies, with the phallus as ultimate signifier, Bakhtin discerns difference *within* the body […] for Bakhtin all bodies are self-differentiating; every body is a constantly expanding and contracting universe' (ibid, emphasis in the original). Stam concludes therefore that Bakhtin's view of the body is not phallocentric (ibid).

From our analysis of the video *Nessun dorma*,[158] the same vision emerges, that of seeing the body as cosmic, going beyond the confines of what is regarded as feminine or masculine, with the enormous round form of the subject that in the end cannot but be associated with the pregnant female form as well as the moon. More generally, we can say that, as in Bakhtin's study of Rabelais, it is not just the genitals that are given importance but also 'corporeal zones quite neutral from the standpoint of sexual difference, zones where the male-female binary opposition becomes quite simply non pertinent.' (ibid: 162).

Stam maintains that against the patriarchal ideology of 'difference', Bakhtin 'exalts the blurring and shifting of gender distinctions' (ibid: 163), lauding the 'androgynous body of carnival representation' (ibid). Linked to the 'exaltation of androgyny' is 'the practice of transvestism' (ibid), which, in the case of Ciprì and

[158] See chapter 2.1.2.

Maresco is a fundamental feature of their cinema.[159] Carnival brings back 'the sartorial exuberance of an earlier more festive time which allowed for the decorative, narcissistic, ludic aspects of male dress' (Stam 1992: 164).

'Sartorial exuberance' is not a feature of the minimalist world of Ciprì and Maresco, even though usually the 'men dressed as women' are more covered up and display some elements of coquetry. Full-scale exuberance, apart from Tremmotori, is to be found above all in Pitrinu, in the sequence in which he first meets Fefè, where he imagines himself dressed in ornate oriental dress like a geisha. He mimes to the song *Tu che m'hai preso il cuor*, the Italian version of Lehár's *Dein ist mein ganzes Hertz* ('Yours Is My Heart Alone'). Exclusive love becomes a fantasy for Pitrinu until his end, a fantasy that Fefè seems above all to go along with, so that he can steal Pitrinu's large diamond ring, which he ultimately pulls off the corpse's finger at Pitrinu's funeral vigil.

Transvestism is therefore also associated with love, even though there are no love stories in the traditional sense of the term in Ciprì and Maresco, apart from Pitrinu and Fefè's, which, through its parody of a certain saccharine and meaningless type of love story reminiscent of immediate post-war romantic films, serves to establish the feminine as a refuge from the hostility of the whole community towards the lovers' relationship. As the two directors themselves stated, they wanted to exclude 'tenderness' from their films (Valentini 1999: 21). This explains the absence of women (and children) as a need to represent a world that has reached its end and has no future. They aim to eliminate the chance of continuity, the 'illusory return to life' (ibid: 22) that women and children represent.

[159] The revolutionary force of transvestism within carnival has often been acknowledged. Stam underlines how men's clothing has come to symbolise 'devotion to the principles of duty, renunciation and self control' (ibid); while the 'complement' of this 'renunciation', according to Silverman, was 'the specularization of women, the exclusive association of women with narcissism, ornament, and playfulness in clothing' (Silverman in Stam 1992: 163-164).

It is a world closed in upon itself, in a void that highlights the absence of the feminine, an absence that nonetheless does not change a certain way of being male, where traditional patriarchal roles continue to be perpetuated to the extreme. Although we could conclude that the anguish in this world is determined by the very absence of the feminine, Franco Maresco suggested in an interview that it is because of the absence of women that men are at ease with their bodies: 'woman would have destroyed the beauty of the composition of these monsters' (Morreale 2003: 81). Even though their characters are static and enormous they seem to convey a certain lightness, which makes them almost abstract (ibid). This 'lightness' can be seen in the way the characters inhabit space and, to quote Bakhtin, 'the limits between the body and the world are erased, leading to the fusion of the one with the other and with surrounding objects' (Bakhtin, 2009: 310). It is a 'fusion' with 'surroundings' constituted by ruins and rubble, reflecting the bleakness of a carnival that, as we will see in the next section, has an intimate connection with death.

2.3 Hunger

This part focuses on how hunger in its different forms functions as a key narrative driver, exploring its connections with peasant culture, the carnivalesque and death. The discussion takes into account social changes in post-war Italy and is placed in the context of Italian cinema from neorealism to directors such as Fellini and Ferreri and above all Pasolini (part 2.3.1). Ciprì and Maresco's portrayal of hunger shares many similarities with Pasolini's early films, to the extent that their cinema can be seen as a parody of Pasolini's style and poetics (part 2.3.2 and 2.3.3). Other influences considered are the Brazilian Cinema Novo, where the lack of technical resources becomes a metaphor for hunger and is transformed into an expressive force, and the cinema of Monty Python, in particular *The Meaning of Life* and *The Life of Brian*, in which the grotesque, irreverent Rabelaisian humour creates a strong connection with Ciprì and Maresco (part 2.3.2). The discussion will also encompass an analysis of death and the sacred (part 2.3.3), including how the representation of the body in Pasolini's early films is modelled on the myth of the innocence of peasant culture.

The chapter concludes with an evaluation of Ciprì and Maresco's cinema in the light of Franco Cassano's *Il Pensiero meridiano* (1996), 'Southern Thought'. It includes a comparison between the vision of life emerging from Ciprì and Maresco's cinema and that invoked by Cassano, and inspired by Pasolini, for a new South defined in terms of recuperation and revitalisation of traditional aspects of Mediterranean culture, such us 'slowness' and 'sensuality'.

2.3.1 Hunger and Italian cinema

Italian history is marked by poverty. Starting in the dark years of the Middle Ages and continuing through the XVI century, large numbers of beggars flocked to the cities, causing such difficulties that special laws were passed to distinguish between

'genuine' and 'false' beggars (Ce.R.D.E.F 2006). Poverty still seemed to be an issue after the unification of the country in 1861, since in 1901 Francesco Nitti, a highly influential economist who served as Prime Minister, concluded that Italy was 'naturally poor' because of 'overpopulation and limited resources' (Malanima 2003: 29). During the fascist regime (1922-1943) official propaganda praised the work of the peasant above that of the factory worker since a return to the land and ruralism in general were considered key elements of the economic and cultural politics of Fascism. Predictably, such propaganda completely ignored any aspects that might show the regime in a bad light, avoiding any mention of the issue of hunger and starvation in rural areas (Costa 2001: 1). The situation became desperate after the end of the Second World War, when 1.6 million Italians were unemployed (Ginsborg: 1990: 80). During the years of the Economic Miracle (1950s/1960s) matters improved dramatically to the point where memories of poverty were repressed in a country by then immersed in the values and lifestyle models promoted by the Marshall Plan propaganda.[160] Notwithstanding this, despite being the third-largest economy in the euro-zone, poverty is still a problem in Italy today, with 12.6% of families living in relative poverty and 7.9% in absolute poverty.[161]

As a consequence of this long history of deprivation, hunger has inevitably become a topos in Italian popular traditions and arts. Hunger not only in the sense of lack of food, and the consequent desire to eat, but ravenousness, the inability to be sated, as well as, more extensively, appetite for wealth. It is the fear that the

[160] The first paper of the United States' National Security Council, in November 1947, concerned Italy's 'pre-revolutionary' state, since it was considered that the necessary conditions existed for the Communists to come to power. Introduced in 1948, the Marshall Plan was aimed at getting as close as possible to its intended beneficiaries in order to direct attitudes towards the American idea of wellbeing based on mass production for mass-consumption. The operating principles arrived at in Italy were spelled out more clearly than elsewhere and applied more intensively (Ellwood 2001: 23).

[161] According to ISTAT, the Italian Institute of Statistics, which monitors the socio-economic conditions of the Italian population, in its 2014 annual report on income and lifestyle relating to 2013 (ISTAT 2014).

population carries with it of being hungry that has led to the creation of imaginary places such as *Il paese di Cuccagna,* **'**The Land of Cockaigne', a land of comfort and pleasure where luxury and ease are the governing principles and life's harshness and difficulties do not exist. It has also resulted in the creation of phantasmagoric figures such as the greedy giant Morgante, immortalised by Luigi Pulci in his romantic epic *Morgante* (1483), from which Rabelais drew inspiration for *La vie de Gargantua et de Pantagruel*, the characters in both of which share a huge appetite, consuming 'mountains' of food and drink. All of this brings the discussion back to carnival and what Bakhtin sees as a force of opposition to a dominant worldview, one that celebrates 'temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from established order' (Bakhtin 2009: 10).

Bakhtin (2009) defines the carnivalesque as the combination of sacred and profane, high and low, the blurring of the boundaries between the self and the world. Scenes of communal eating and drinking are identified as fundamental to the carnivalesque with the banquet representing the triumph over social mores and hierarchy. The assumption underlying Bakhtin's concepts, as Janis Udris observes, is that 'it was a popular phenomenon, manifested most commonly in the folk culture of ritual spectacle, parodic verbal compositions, elaborate curses and oaths' and he adds that these elements are evident in the 'various carnivals, festivals and saturnalia which followed the church calendar but which were systematically placed outside the church and religiosity' (Udris 1988: 11-12).

In Italian history, carnival has functioned as a rite to push back the grip of winter and its associated lack of food, situated as it is in the Roman Catholic calendar between Epiphany and Lent. The earliest documented evidence we have of carnival dates from around the VIII century, and refers to a festival involving an unruly enjoyment of eating and drinking and other sensual pleasures. The festivities, which

culminated in the death and funeral of a dummy figure - representing at the same time the sovereign of The Land of Cockaigne and the personification of the misfortunes of the previous year - was intended as an allegory of renewal and rebirth through the exorcism of death (Tarantino 2005).

One of the foremost experts on hunger in Italian popular traditions is Piero Camporesi. In *Il paese della fame* (1978, 2009)[162] and *Il pane selvaggio* (1980, 2004),[163] Camporesi discusses the body in pre-industrial society, reconstructing the dreams, hallucinations and nightmares of an impoverished and starving populace. According to Camporesi, the peasant world has been 'buried', categorised as belonging to some kind of distant past while in fact 'the world we have lost was until quite recently very close at hand, right outside our cities. In only a few decades it has been dissolved and hugely distanced, sucked away into a vortex of faraway centuries' (Camporesi 1978, 2009: 259). Camporesi also claims that the past of this culture exists in parallel to our own present, concluding that 'the escape into artificial paradises by the ragged and starving crowds of modern times' is born out of the unbearable conditions of the real world; the lack of human vitality and the scarcity or, conversely, the excess of food that lead to a shaky, incoherent and spasmodic interpretation of reality (Camporesi 1980, 2004: 5).

Before analysing hunger in relation to peasant culture and the carnivalesque in Ciprì and Maresco, it is useful to place their cinema in the context of the representation of hunger in Italian cinema from neorealism onwards. As evinced in neorealist cinema, in the final years of the Second World War the hunt for flour and bread epitomised the basic fight for survival and the ration book became the symbol of an era. Roberto Rossellini's *Roma città aperta* opens with scenes showing the

[162] Translated into English as *The Land of Hunger* (Camporesi 1994).
[163] Translated into English as *Bread of Dreams: Food and Fantasy in Early Modern Europe* (Camporesi 1996).

climate of terror during the occupation of Rome in 1945 and the desperate conditions created by the war are brought to life through references to the rationing of bread, the mobs and riots outside bakeries and the black market.

It was however comedy films that mostly dealt with the issue of hunger in the years after neorealism, focusing on the effects of the scarcity of food. One example is Steno and Mario Monicelli's *Guardie e ladri* / *Cops and Robbers* (1951). The film recounts the story of a small-time thief who pretends to be the father of some children receiving relief packages from the Americans. A policeman catches him in the act and a pursuit ensues. The lead actor in the film is the Neapolitan Antonio De Curtis, AKA Totò (1898-1967), who has featured in around 100 films and whose acting style can be seen as directly descending from the tradition of the *Commedia dell'Arte* with trademarks such as a puppet-like, disjointed gesticulation, emphasised facial expressions focusing on the communication of urges such as hunger and sexual desire (Moscati 2005: 21).

Many of Totò's films revolve around the theme of hunger, for instance *Miseria e nobiltà / Poverty and Nobility* (1954)[164] by Mario Mattoli, the most famous sequence of which shows two starving families seated around an empty dining table who watch with incredulity as waiters appear and start to bring in serving dishes laden with food. The two families begin to eat with all due correctness but soon the polite act of eating gives way to a carnivalesque celebration that transforms the piteous start of the scene into a riotous party with Totò dancing on the table, filling his pockets with spaghetti. It is an exorcism of the fear of hunger seen as an atavistic and inexorable condition, often embodied in the characters played by Totò (Moscati 2005: 21).

[164] Based on a play by Eduardo Scarpetta, the film tells the story of the families of a scribe and a photographer who are forced to share the same apartment. The families often go hungry and their desperate conditions lead them to readily participate in a minor swindle.

Totò also featured in Pasolini's films, embodying many aspects of Pasolini's early vision of peasant culture, for instance in *Uccellacci e uccellini*,[165] which switches between scenes relating to a father and son living in one of Rome's *borgate* and the life of two followers of Saint Francis, in each instance played by *Totò* and Ninetto Davoli. As followers of Saint Francis, they recall a mythical era of peasant life, while in their roles as father and son living in Rome's *borgate* they stand for what remains of that culture, as the last representatives of a people detached from history, living according to a set of rules handed down over the centuries.[166]

The exorcism of hunger was followed in the years of the Economic Miracle by the race towards material wellbeing with an increasing consumption of food and purchase of ever more costly foodstuffs. It was a race that led to ever greater social differences, as Fellini's restaurant sequence in *E la nave va* shows,[167] where the luxury enjoyed by the opera singers and their impresarios is in stark contrast with the hellish atmosphere of the kitchens with cooks and scrubbers working frenetically to satisfy their demanding requirements. In Fellini hunger is frequently linked to sex, in a search for satisfaction that is common to every social class, exemplified by Trimalchio's banquet in *Satyricon* (1969) and the busy pavement *trattoria* in *Roma* (1972), which share the same hedonistic ambience.

In *La grande abbuffata / The Grande Bouffe* (1973), Marco Ferreri presents a ferocious critique of a consumerist society, where 'satiety becomes a form of euthanasia, a way of escaping from the boredom of a life that has lost all meaning' (Ronconi 2002: 27). The film tells the story of four men who, tired of the life they lead, plan to commit suicide by eating themselves to death in an orgy of sex and food. The sex/food association is further explored by Ferreri in *La carne / Flesh* (1991).

[165] See chapter 1.1.3.
[166] See chapter 1.1.3.
[167] See chapter 2.1.1.

The two protagonists, Paolo and Francesca, eat and have sex uninterruptedly. When Paolo finds out that Francesca wants to leave, he kills her then chops her up and eats her. Pasolini also touches on cannibalism in *Porcile / Pigsty* (1969),[168] proposing the metaphor of 'devouring', of the 'human pigsty' seen as the seat of power, cynical and cruel, based on social blackmail and economic absolutism. These themes are revisited in Pasolini's last film, *Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma / Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom* (1975),[169] a film that was partly inspired by Ferreri's *La grande abbuffata*, where the corporeal and sexual dimension takes on a macabre and sordid nature in its denunciation of power as the source of all forms of iniquity and nefariousness.

Ciprì and Maresco's films share much of the bleak vision of a film like *Salò* in their representation of a degraded corporeality, attributed by Pasolini to the 'anthropological mutation' that he regarded 1970s Italy as headed towards. While he was working on *Salò*, Pasolini disowned his *Triologia della vita*, 'Trilogy of Life' (*The Decameron*, 1971, *The Canterbury Tales*, 1972, and *The Arabian Nights*, 1974) stating that his 'nostalgia for a lost sexual innocence, a time before repression, was idealistic and unrealistic'. His belief in the 'innocence of the body', as it was represented in the Trilogy of Life, had given way to his conclusion that sexuality and the body 'were a language, and therefore open to mutations' (Rumble 1996: 83). It was a mutation that he saw in terms of degradation, leading him to admit that as Italy was still to some extent an underdeveloped country he was convinced that this degradation, which had already taken place in more developed countries, had not yet touched Italy (ibid: 85). However, as we shall see, it was mainly the films of

[168] The film is comprised of two stories, one set in ancient times and the other modern-day. In the first story a young man, who initially survives on insects, reptiles and berries, kills and eats a soldier and thereafter adopts cannibalism as a form of ideology, inspiring a group of followers to join him. In the second story, a rich young German man is profoundly troubled by his deep sexual attraction for pigs and ends up devoured by pigs.

[169] Inspired by Dante's *Inferno* and the Marquis De Sade's *The 120 Days of Sodom*, the film tells the story of four powerful individuals: a Duke, a Bishop, a Magistrate and a President, who, in the fascist republic of Salò, segregated and tortured young men and women.

Pasolini's early Roman phase, *Accattone* (1961), *Mamma Roma* (1962), *La ricotta* (1963) and *Uccellacci e uccellini* (1966), with their references to peasant culture and the carnivalesque, that became a major source of inspiration for Ciprì and Maresco.

Ciprì and Maresco go beyond establishing a parallel with the past to perform an actual reappropriation of those elements of peasant culture referred to by Camporesi. Instead of being located 'outside the walls', this culture is re-created within or just outside the city itself, represented by means of a city-text that erases all signs of modernity and shows men moving through a dimension modelled on the customs and rituals associated with rural life. The image of Italy depicted by Camporesi (1980, 2004), in which a starving host swarms, obsessed by demons and terrorised by worms and other 'horrid creatures', takes us back to Ciprì and Maresco's dark world, featuring a peasant society living hand to mouth in constant fear of the ire of the gods.

From their very early videos - with titles such as *Pasta con le patate* (1989, 'Pasta with potatoes') and *Pasta e fagioli* (1993, 'Pasta with beans'),[170] or a video like *Adotta un siciliano* ('Adopt a Sicilian', 1990), in which we see characters standing immobile with an empty plate in hand - hunger has been one of Ciprì and Maresco's main themes. These videos, which are frequently structured around a question and answer format conducted by Maresco's voice-off, often involve grotesque situations such as Pietro Giordano who, explaining that he has not eaten for ten days, pretends to disembowel a cat or, for instance, Giuseppe Paviglianiti avidly eating and farting, re-proposing the topos of huge bodies and stomachs that can never be filled. There is also a series of videos called *Provvidenza* ('Providence') clearly recalling the Land of

[170] In *Pasta con le patate* a boy asks two men for some potatoes so his aunt can make pasta with potatoes. The boy's aunt slips over on some of the peelings and dies. In *Pasta e fagioli*, Paviglianiti, all the while farting and belching, eats an enormous quantity of pasta with beans.

Cockaigne, in which we see the obviously hungry characters seated around a table onto which, as if by miracle, a roast chicken lands from above.

As far as the full-length films are concerned, the search for food and sex are the main themes of the essentially plotless *Lo zio di Brooklyn***.** The poky kitchen of the Gemelli family is the hub of the house. We see them eating greedily and fighting over food, rebuking each other for not working enough to deserve food. Right next to the kitchen is the toilet, which the brothers constantly visit, followed by the inevitable sound of flushing. Eating, always the same food, characterises Paletta's family environment in the first episode of *Totò che visse due volte*, while in the second episode the hunt for food is pivotal. Fefè, having taken to his bed weak from hunger, is persuaded by his friends to go to his lover Pitrinu's funeral vigil. Once there, he is unable to take his eyes off a huge piece of cheese that Pitrinu's brother is eating and he ends up stealing it. In the third episode, which tells the story of the Christ-like Totò, we are presented with a parody of the Last Supper in which the disciples pounce on the food and greedily devour it, ignoring the fact that Totò/Christ has not yet joined them at the table.

Il ritorno di Cagliostro does not expressly deal with hunger, although the context in which the producers, directors and actors of the production house Trinacria Film move is one of hunger, threadbare and moth-eaten, lacking in the basic equipment.[171] The theme returns, however, in Ciprì's first film after his split with Maresco, *E' stato il figlio / It Was the Son* (2012). Shot in Puglia but set in Palermo, the film is about the repercussions suffered by a poor family when the Mafia kills their daughter. They succeed in claiming compensation but spend all the money they receive on a Mercedes, which is the cause of further woes.

[171] There are some oblique references to hunger through the use of clips from one of Trinacria Film's productions, an improbable epic film about Saint Rosalia, the hermit patron saint of Palermo who, according to tradition, miraculously appeared in 1624 to save the local population from the plague.

2.3.2 The aesthetics of hunger

After Ciprì and Maresco's first retrospective in England, Jonathan Romney (2000) described their work as 'medievally grotesque' and observed that it appeared to be a 'self-conscious Monty Python-ish wind-up'. Comparisons to the early Monty Python were made after the premiere of *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* in Hong Kong (Marshall 2003), while in France, following the release of *Lo zio di Brooklyn*, Monty Python along with directors such as Buñuel and Ferreri were mentioned (Perret 2013). What Ciprì and Maresco share with Monty Python are their influences from a Rabelaisian tradition 'with its grotesque conception of the body which has its spiritual centre in the "material bodily lower stratum"' (Bakhtin in Udris 1988:10). Janis Udris highlights, for instance, how the peasant sequence at the start of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975), and Terry Gilliam's Fishfingers' evening meal in *Jabberwocky* (1977) are strongly linked to the Rabelaisian celebrations of 'excessive eating and drinking, vomiting, prodigious floods of urine, etc.' (ibid).

As an example of monstrous eating, we can compare Terry Jones' Mr Creosote in *The Meaning of Life* (1983) to Giuseppe Paviglianiti in *Il Pranzo* ('The Meal'), part of the *Cinico TV* television series. In *The Meaning of Life*, we see Mr Creosote with his gigantic stomach hanging on the floor [Figure 14] entering an exclusive French restaurant. He is welcomed by the *maître d'* (John Cleese), who promptly calls for a bucket to be brought for him. As soon as the bucket arrives, Mr Creosote vomits copiously provoking a certain discomfort in the other clients while the *maître d'* seems perfectly at ease with the situation. Creosote then eats several courses vomiting all over himself, his table, and the restaurant staff. Finally, after being persuaded by the *maître d'* to have a single after-dinner mint, he explodes covering the other diners with vomit. When the explosion clears, we see Creosote still

alive with his chest cavity open, revealing his beating heart. As he looks around, confused, the *maître d'* presents him with the bill.

Figure 14: Terry Jones as Mr Creosote in Monty Python's *The Meaning of Life* (1983)

The Mr Creosote sequence can be contrasted with Paviglianiti's *Il pranzo*, an hour-long video that, as with Mr Creosote, provocatively aims to discomfit the spectator. In a long take we see Paviglianiti's large body [Figure 15], naked from the waist up, sitting at a small table in the open, with the sound of traffic in the distance. On the table there is a bottle of wine, three halves of watermelon, some potatoes, two roasted chickens and a huge pan from which he transfers pasta into a large bowl. He swallows the pasta at a constant pace, filling the bowl each time he empties it, drinking copiously from the bottle of wine, trying to provoke belches and farts. Very little happens. At a certain point he kills a fly that falls into the pasta; he picks it up and throws it away, then carries on eating. Until, after finishing all the pasta and drinking the last drop of wine, he vomits for some time while a cat jumps up onto his shoulder. He dozes a little, then wakes up and starts eating the chicken, all the while muttering incomprehensibly to himself, appearing to be greatly enjoying the chicken until, having finished it and utterly exhausted, he stares expressionless into the camera.

Figure 15: Giuseppe Paviglianiti in *Il pranzo*

The social contexts represented in the two films, the exclusive French restaurant and the basic open-air meal, are polar opposites but both are highly effective in their satirical intent. In Monty Python we witness what is almost a form of torture of Mr Creosote exercised by the cynical *maître d',* establishing the inevitable association, as Katariina Kyrölä (2014: 140) observes, of white male fatness with bourgeois greed, excessive wealth and power. In Ciprì and Maresco it is more a masochistic act, almost as if Paviglianiti wants to kill himself, daring his own body to cope, forcing it beyond its limits through a mechanical and obsessive swallowing. [172]

We can also find elements of influence from the Brazilian Cinema Novo, whose carnivalesque nature Stam highlights, recalling how Bakhtin gives the name carnival to the 'de-centralising (centrifugal) forces that militate against official power and ideology' (Stam 1992: 122). These common elements are mostly to be found in the early works of the movement in the 1960s, which featured the so-called 'aesthetic of hunger', as defined by Glauber Rocha (1965). This aesthetic is characterised by the desire to achieve a specific sense of 'Brazilianness', standing up against

[172] In 2000, Giuseppe Paviglianiti died of meteorism, a rapid accumulation of gas in the intestine, typically a sign of bowel necrosis from bacterial infection.

'commercialism, exploitation, pornography and the tyranny of technique' with 'cannibalism' becoming a key cultural trope under the broader concept of the carnivalesque (Shohat and Stam 2014).[173] In creating this aesthetic, Cinema Novo filmmakers Nelson Pereira, Rui Guerra, Carlos Diegues, Joaquin Pedro de Andrade and Leon Hirszman (Stam and Johnson 1979, 2005: 13) were much influenced by Italian neorealism and the French Nouvelle Vague with their use of black and white film and hand-held cameras to create a documentary-like quality, aiming for 'a symbiosis of theme and method' while 'the lack of technical resources was metaphorically transmogrified into an expressive force' (ibid: 256). 'Consuming' the concepts and the philosophy of neorealism and the Nouvelle Vague led the Cinema Novo filmmakers to articulate an aesthetic that turned European art cinema towards political ends. This has its reverberations in Ciprì and Maresco's cinema; the pair started out working on VHS video using very basic equipment, faithful to the idea of an 'imperfect cinema', 'hungry' in its own impoverished means of production. Their output can ultimately be seen as an assimilation of various types of art cinema, the product of which is a distinctive style, free from all commonplaces and traditional conventions usually used to represent Sicily, leading to the formation of their own sense of 'Sicilianity'.[174]

In order to assess the different influences, it will be useful to compare Ciprì and Maresco's cinema alongside that of Pasolini with one of the first examples of the cinema of hunger, Nelson Pereira dos Santos' *Vidas Secas* / *Barren Lives* (1963). Set in Brazil's arid northeast, this is a film in which, according to Shohat and Stam (2014: 258), the cinematography is 'dry and harsh, like the landscape'. It follows the story of

[173] Although cannibalism was a popular trope of the European avant-garde, only in Brazil, as a result of Oswald de Andrade's writings in the 1950s, did it become key and continue over many decades. Thus we find in Brazil a literalisation of the metaphors of the European avant-garde (Stam 1992: 238), occurring as a response to the conditions of desperate poverty and political repression in the country.
[174] See chapter 3.1.

a peasant family forced to emigrate, using people living in the same conditions as those narrated in the film as actors, illiterate people who 'have a tenuous grasp even on spoken language, communicating only in gestures, grunts, and monosyllables' (ibid: 257). While these elements are clearly reflected in Ciprì and Maresco, the same does not apply to Pasolini, despite the fact that he has been cited as a key influence on the Cinema Novo (Creus 2011). Pasolini pursued naturalism mainly through the choice of bodies that he considered to be in themselves a 'sign' of the culture he aimed to represent. However, despite making use of Roman dialect, his film dialogues are unnaturally articulate and often loaded with his philosophical and political views.

According to Shohat and Stam, dos Santos took inspiration from the indirect free style in literature, which shares certain similarities with Pasolini's concept of 'cinema of poetry'. This style can be defined as 'a mode of discourse that begins in the third person ('he thought') and then quietly modulates into a more or less direct, but still third-person, presentation of a character's thoughts and feelings' (Shohat and Stam 2014: 257), a highly 'subjectivized' discourse that translated into cinema sees the director projecting himself 'in the minds and bodies' of the characters (ibid). It is a subjectivity that is retained throughout, passing also to the children and the family dog through subjective camera perspectives and an unorthodox use of camera angles, light and dolly.[175]

Another interesting aspect of dos Santos' film is the extreme dilation of time, which is also a characteristic of Ciprì and Maresco's cinema.[176] As Shohat and Stam observe:

[175] Ciprì and Maresco use this same technique in the flashback to Pitrinu's childhood in which he accompanies his father on a looting mission to a village whose inhabitants have been killed. The whole scene is filmed using a rudimentary dolly set low down so the action unfolds from the child Pitrinu's point of view. The same technique is used for the dogs that chase Fefè and his friends on their way to Pitrinu's funeral vigil.

[176] See chapter 1.1.3.

> A laconic camera records the snail-like progress of four human figures and a dog across the inhospitable landscape. Their slow approach suggests the cultural distance between the peasant characters and the middle-class urban spectator. At the same time, the shot's unconventional prolongation (it lasts four minutes) warns the spectator not to expect the fast pacing and high density of incident that characterise entertainment films. The mimetic incorporation of the lived tempo of peasant life forms part of the film's meaning; the spectator's experience will be symbolically 'dry', like that of the characters. (Shohat and Stam 2014: 259)

Apart from these striking similarities with Cinema Novo, their treatment of hunger above all connects Ciprì and Maresco with Pasolini, so intimately that, with the exception of *Il ritorno di Cagliostro*, their work may in some senses only be fully understood when viewed through the lens of Pasolini's cinema. What is fundamentally Pasolinian in Ciprì and Maresco is the representation of life as primordial, with the body seen as the highest form of expression. As in Pasolini, in Ciprì and Maresco there is a frantic drive towards the satisfaction of physical needs. The characters of Paletta and Fefè in *Totò che visse due volte* both recall the character of Stracci in Pasolini's *La ricotta*. Paletta is shown incessantly in search of sex and Fefè, like Stracci, of food, and both of them, like Stracci, end up on the cross. [177] As in Pasolini, Ciprì and Maresco's interest lies in everyday survival, in the reality of people who, instead of looking for a job,[178] live hand to mouth, often relying on dishonest means in order to eat. We recall, for instance**,** Pasolini's *Accattone* in which Accattone plots with his friend Fulvio to eat all the pasta that they are supposed to be sharing with their friends.[179] Examples of this kind of expedient abound in Ciprì and

[177] The slapstick style we find in *La ricotta* is recreated in the Paletta episode, since Paletta, always on the move, never speaks and communicates with emphatic facial and physical expressions reminiscent of silent cinema. The same accelerated slapstick-like rhythm that characterises Stracci when he goes to buy a large piece of ricotta cheese is mirrored in the sequence in which Fefè steals a large piece of cheese at Pitrinu's mourning vigil and hurries home.

[178] The theme of seeking employment is, on the other hand, common to many neorealist films, for example in Vittorio De Sica's *Ladri di biciclette* a man who has been desperately seeking work finally finds employment but then the bicycle he needs in order to work is stolen.

[179] They pretend to have an argument in which Fulvio insults them all and Accattone pretends to be offended and persuades them all to leave with him (with the idea that he will then secretly return to

Maresco and are the theme of one of their documentaries entitled *Come inguaiammo il cinema italiano. La vera storia di Franco e Ciccio / How We Got Italian Cinema into Trouble: Franco & Ciccio's Real Story* (2004), centres on the association of hunger with comedy and is dedicated to the Palermitan comedic duo Franco Franchi (1928-1992) and Ciccio Ingrassia (1922-2003).[180] In Ciprì and Maresco's documentary, Franchi recalls an episode from his childhood that is reminiscent of the sequence in *Accattone* just referred to. Having invited some neighbours to lunch, a large amount of salt was added to the pasta in the, ultimately disappointed, hopes that this would discourage the neighbours from eating it.

Alessandra Fagioli (2000) points out how in Pasolini, alongside the physiology of the body, dictated by needs and instincts, there is also a pathology of the body governed by unexpected and destructive reactions. An example of this is again Stracci, who dies on the cross of indigestion. The body therefore continues to communicate not only by means of its basic and urgent instinctive needs but also by means of more serious symptoms and ailments, demonstrating its vulnerability right up until death. We can see the same pathology of the body governed by unexpected reactions in Ciprì and Maresco, for instance in the sequence in *Lo zio di Brooklyn* in which the grandson asks the grandfather why he has ended up in such a poor physical condition and the grandfather replies that it is the effect of old age working inexorably on human beings, before reaching into his pocket for his false teeth and gorging on chicken until he chokes to death.

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share the pasta with Fulvio). Even though the plan works, ironically Accattone still doesn't manage to eat the pasta as he then meets Stella for the first time.

[180] Both actors were inspired by Totò and also featured with Totò in Pasolini's short film *Che cosa sono le nuvole? / What Are Clouds?* (1968), where they play puppets acting out the story of Shakespeare's Othello. The spectators tear Iago (Totò) and Othello (Ninetto Davoli) to pieces and they end up dumped on a refuse heap, from which they look up to discover the 'beauty of the clouds'.

2.3.3 Hunger, death and the sacred

Death, in Pasolini, is intrinsically linked to hunger, and seen as 'the most mythic and epic aspect there is and whose sense only "prehistoric cultures" like the sub-proletariat could achieve' (Green 1990: 45). As Pasolini says in *Empirismo eretico* (1972, 1991), where he establishes a parallel between death and editing, 'it is absolutely necessary to die, because so long as we live, we have no meaning, and the language of our lives […] is untranslatable, a chaos of possibilities, a search for relations and meanings without resolution. Death effects an instantaneous montage of our lives; that is, it chooses the truly meaningful moments' (Pasolini in Viano 1993: 81).

Marco Saggioro (2012), discussing *La ricotta*, 'the Pasolini film most close to Bakhtin's notions of the carnivalesque' (Rohdie 1995: 149),[181] maintains that food 'made sacred through the symbolism of the Christian supper, is a supper of *agape*, spiritual love, and a harbinger of death' (Saggioro 2012). When compared to the cannibal banquets of archaic religions 'it is evident that Stracci himself is the sacrificial victim of the banquet in *La ricotta*' (ibid). In the final scenes of the film, the long buffet table for the VIP guests dominates the scene, while the three crosses of the crucifixion are relegated to the background [Figure 16], including the cross on which Stracci dies of indigestion, 'a banquet of bourgeois society that feasts on the sub-proletariat' (ibid).

[181] Rohdie (1995: 149) notes how *La ricotta* contains elements of carnival such as 'derision, orgy, excess, blasphemy, reversal of the normal, parody, the sacred paradox'.

Figure 16: The final sequence of Pasolini's *La ricotta* (1963)

In Pasolini, death, like hunger, functions as a narrative force. It constantly pervades events with dark and baleful omens and, asserts Fagioli (2000), arrives as the final catharsis at the end of a journey in accordance with the logic of the fatal inevitability of the sub-proletarian condition, from which the only escape is the sacrifice of one's body and one's life. Accattone is indeed pervaded by a sense of his own mortality that leads him to have a dream about his funeral, as if his whole life was meant to lead to his death, and his dying words are 'At last I feel good'.

In Ciprì and Maresco death is also ever-present but, in contrast to Pasolini, it is seen as meaningless. In the sequence of the resurrection of the flesh in *Lo Zio di Brooklyn*, the characters note that nothing has changed; they are the same as they were before and Paradise is exactly the same as Earth. The video *Ai rotoli* (1996) is another pertinent example of this concept of the meaninglessness of death, in which we see a continuous take of a cemetery in Palermo, Santa Maria dei Rotoli, with Carmelo Bene's voice-off reading some passages from Antonio Pizzuto's experimental novel S*ignorina Rosina* (1956, 2004) describing a detailed and eventful visit to a cemetery.[182] From the description of the place that emerges, we are given a

[182] The book recounts the ups and downs of a secretary and her clumsy friend, as they make small everyday discoveries, the Signorina Rosina of the title referring to at least six different people.

sense of antique decorum, creating an atemporal aura that accentuates the inexorability of death, while the camera lingers over the squalor and abandonment of neglected tombs, surrounded by rubbish and broken headstones, where the inscriptions on the tombs are badly faded or completely erased.

The hilarity of Rabelais' carnival is absent from Ciprì and Maresco's Palermo. Notwithstanding that, as in Rabelais, their carnival presents a world governed by basic needs, where folk are 'blasphemous rather than adoring, cunning rather than intelligent' (Michael Holquist in Bakhtin 2009: xix), it fails, nevertheless, to reconcile the primordial opposition between life and death. Contrary to what Bakhtin writes about carnival as 'a myth of ambivalence that denies the "end" by sublimating death in and through laughter' (Lachmann 1988-1989: 124), in Ciprì and Maresco death is not denied but ever-present. It is a world where there is a continual process of life feeding on death and death feeding on life. In the second episode of *Totò che visse due volte*, the rats that emerge from the sewers and eat the cheese Fefè has stolen from Bastiano end up on Fefè's bed and then go out into the open air, representing the link with the other world. In the same episode, in Pitrinu's flashback of his childhood, we see his father wrenching the ring from the finger of a corpse in a place of ruins.[183] Pitrinu's father will then himself be the victim of the same theft once he dies; Pitrinu and Fefè dig up Pitrinu's father's grave and steal his ring and finally Fefè steals it from Pitrinu when he in turn dies.

Pasolini directs the sacred/profane dichotomy - on which, according to Bakhtin, the carnival tradition is based - towards establishing a sacred dimension to the reality of the sub-proletariat. 'Il santo è Stracci' ('Stracci is the Saint'), says Pasolini in one of his poems (Pasolini 1993: 675). Despite his hunger, Stracci gives his packed lunch to his family and, in his instinctual naivety, makes the sign of the

[183] We assume it has either been bombed or affected by an earthquake.

cross in front of sacred images. The bourgeois characters, by contrast, including the Director (played by Orson Welles), are shown crowded around the banquet, completely oblivious to the tragedy that is playing out around them.

In *La ricotta* the sacred/profane dichotomy is expressed in particular in relation to food. On the one hand we witness the events surrounding Stracci's handing over his packed lunch to his family and purchase of the ricotta cheese and, on the other, the recurrent images of the scenery and props relating to the Last Supper for the film being made about the life of Christ, which consist of an elaborately laid out table designed to look like an image from an Old Master still life, the abundance of which highlights Stracci's unassuageable hunger.

In Ciprì and Maresco the sacred/profane dichotomy is used either in its most extreme forms, for instance in the sequence in which the idiot masturbates against the statue of Saint Rosalia, or with parodic intent, clearly targeting the conventions used by Pasolini to establish the sacred. These include, for instance, Pasolini's preference for representing his characters frontally with high contrast chiaroscuro, according to the formal models adopted in Italian Renaissance art, as well as the use of sacred music to establish the association of sacredness with his subjects. A comparison of the fight between Accattone and his brother in law with the scene in Ciprì and Maresco when Paletta is spat upon by two people passing by on a bicycle, serves to highlight these associations, since both scenes use Bach's *St. Matthew's Passion*. The use of Bach's sacred music in Pasolini was intended to create 'a sort of melding of the brutality and violence of the situation with the sublime quality of the music,' which obliges the spectators to acknowledge that they are witnessing 'an epic struggle that flows into the sacred' (Molteni 2012). In Ciprì and Maresco, on the other hand, the *St. Matthew Passion* is used in an emphatic way to highlight the relentless mockery of

Paletta, so that, in contrast to the dramatic impact created in Pasolini, the effect is one of parody (of Pasolini) rather than tragedy.

A further example of this relationship with Pasolini can be found through a comparison of the initial sequence from Pasolini's *Mamma Roma* with the sequence of the Last Supper in *Totò che visse due volte*. This comparison also enables us to consider another topos identified by Bakhtin in the carnivalesque, that of the 'comic banquet' that 'nearly always [exhibited] elements parodying and travestying the Last Supper' (Bakhtin 2009: 290), and 'had the power of liberating the word from the shackles of piousness and fear of God', with everything becoming 'open to play and merriment' (ibid: 288).

Leonardo's *Last Supper* (1494-98)[184] [Figure 17], a painting that 'has been, more than any other picture, copied, adapted, abused and lampooned' (Steinberg 2001: 12) is referenced in both Ciprì and Maresco [Figures 18] and Pasolini [Figures 19] and by Buñuel in *Viridiana* [Figure 20], where the positions of Christ and the disciples in Leonardo's painting are assumed by beggars. Although it was released only the year before *Mamma Roma*, Pasolini claimed to know nothing of Buñuel and never to have seen *Viridiana* (Di Carlo 2012a). Other directors have made references to Leonardo's *Last Supper* after Buñuel,[185] and Ciprì and Maresco's work shows influences from *Viridiana* itself, especially as regards the allegory of the failure of Christ's mission on Earth, as well as from Bene's *Salomè* (1972), as far as its irreverent spirit is concerned,[186] though Bene's series of close-ups and extreme close-ups, over-bright colours and fast editing are in stark contrast to the austere black and

[184] However, as far as *Mamma Roma* is concerned, Carlo Di Carlo (2012b) suggests that reference could be being made to other Renaissance Last Suppers, bearing in mind the arch in the background, which was common in paintings of the time (one example given being Ghirlandaio).

[185] Other directors who have made reference to Leonardo's *Last Supper*, in one form or another, are Robert Altman (*M.A.S.H.*, 1970), Norman Jewison (*Jesus Christ Superstar*, 1973), Mel Brooks (*History of the World Part 1*, 1981), and before Buñuel, Mervyn LeRoy (*Quo Vadis?* 1951).

[186] Inspired by Oscar Wilde's play *Salome* (1891), Bene's *Salomè* sees Christ transformed into a vampire after he reveals the name of the one who would betray him.

white film and long takes used by Ciprì and Maresco in their Last Supper.

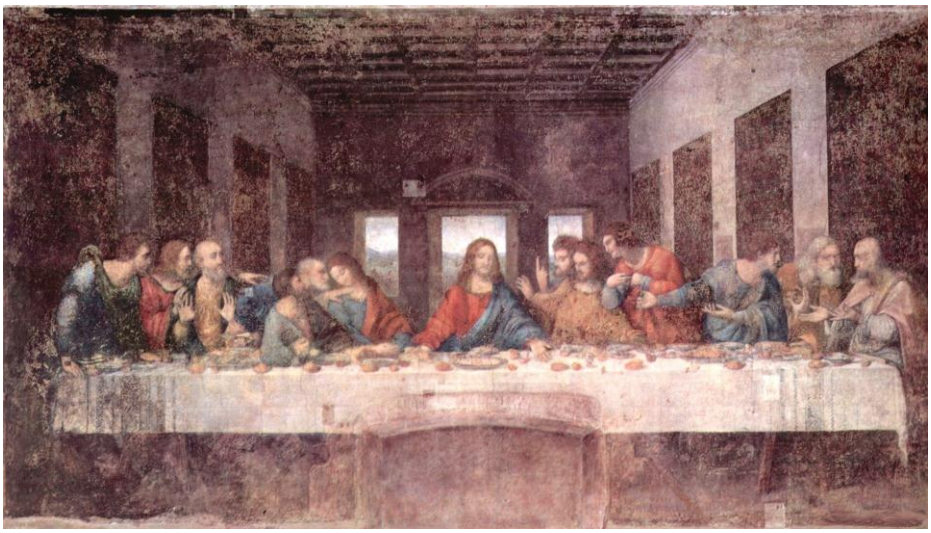

Figure 17: Leonardo's *Last Supper* (1494-98)

Figure 18: Pasolini's homage to Leonardo's *Last Supper* in *Mamma Roma* (1962)

Figure 19: Ciprì and Maresco's homage to Leonardo's *Last Supper* in *Totò che visse due volte*

Figure 20: Buñuel's homage to Leonardo's *Last Supper* in *Viridiana* (1961)

In *Mamma Roma*, Pasolini establishes parallels between the sub-proletariat and the life of Christ.[187] The film shows Mamma Roma at the wedding celebration of her former pimp, Carmine. Played by Accattone actor Franco Citti, Carmine sits in the position of Christ in the Last Supper with his guests arranged around him, the bride's

[187] Two years later Pasolini made a film directly inspired by the life of Christ, *Il vangelo secondo Matteo / The Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (1964), in which the Last Supper receives a very minimalist treatment with no pictorial references and the dialogue is mainly based on Matthew's gospel.

country relatives dispersed amongst the groom's family and friends, who mostly consist of thieves, prostitutes and pimps. The sequence opens with Mamma Roma herding three pigs, which she mockingly calls Carmine's brothers, into the restaurant, establishing from the outset the atmosphere of jocular antagonism that characterises the wedding banquet. This reaches its climax in the exchange, between Mamma Roma and Carmine and then with Carmine's bride Carmelina, of *stornelli*, a traditional popular rhyming repartee in which each participant aims to outdo the other by ridiculing them.

As in carnivalesque banquets, the sequence is laced with religious references. In fact, Mamma Roma responds to Carmelina's father's toast by asking whether he is going to give them a Bible lesson and remarking that 'Mass must be sung', leading the way to the round of *stornelli*. Also, Carmine, like a priest, 'blesses' Mamma Roma's son using a mixture of Latin and Roman dialect: 'Te benedico in nomine Patris, Filii et Spiritus Sancti! Morto un pappone, se ne fa n'altro' ('I bless you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit! As soon as one pimp dies another takes his place.').

The sequence in Ciprì and Maresco, on the other hand, as for the whole of the third episode of *Totò che visse due volte*, is directly inspired by the gospels and features a Christ-like figure called Totò, a rancorous old man, and his nemesis the Mafioso Totò. The episode is an explicitly irreverent version of events recounted in the gospels, employing a kind of comedy whose blueprint can be traced to Monty Python's *The Life of Brian* (1979), a film that, according to Richard Walsh's classification, represents the prototype of the iconoclastic burlesque 'Jesus' film (Walsh 2003: 8). As in *The Life of Brian*, we are presented with a mixture of ancient

and modern elements,[188] and a character that does not wish to be Christ instead of a character that is mistaken for Christ. Elements in common include the refusal to perform miracles, miracles that do not turn out well, ungrateful responses to miracles, strong language and ridicule of episodes from the Bible.

Ciprì and Maresco's Last Supper is divided into two parts. The first part opens with all the characters sitting at the table, with the exception of Judas and Totò who, as we learn from a disciple, 'has gone for a piss'. A Peter-like disciple tells the others to go ahead and eat. Then Totò enters, scratching his genitals, annoyed that they have not waited for him, objecting that they are 'sucking his blood'.[189] Then, referring to Judas, he asks where the hunchback is,[190] complaining that, while he has to work, Judas spends his time with prostitutes. Sarcastically hailing his followers as 'great company', he sits down and officially proclaims the start of the 'festinu', the feast.[191] Tremmotori, the prostitute from the Paletta episode, is called on to entertain them, and exhibits 'herself' in a sort of erotic dance, stirring up the disciples but provoking the wrath of Totò. In the second part of the sequence,[192] Judas approaches Totò with his hands folded in prayer and kisses him, provoking an irritated Totò to comment that Judas seems to have become a 'faggot'. Then two Mafiosi arrive and take Totò away followed by Judas. The disciples carry on eating regardless and when the Peter-like character announces that the feast is over, the others respond with raucous laughter.

In *Mamma Roma* Pasolini aims to reconcile his Marxist and Christian views,

[188] Elements of modern life are transposed into the historical setting in Monty Python while it is the other way around in Ciprì and Maresco.
[189] Reference to: 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you' (Luke 22:19-21).
[190] Judas is played by a hunchback dwarf.
[191] 'Festinu' in Palermitan dialect literally means 'little party' and is mainly associated with the celebration of Saint Rosalia's liberation of the city from the plague in 1624. Even though 'Il Festinu' literally means 'little party' it is actually a big event in Palermo. As with many Sicilian festivals, which are frequently part of the Christian calendar although often deriving from the pagan cycle of harvest and rebirth, food plays a key part.
[192] Between the first and second parts of this sequence we have the sequence of the idiot who masturbates against the statue of Saint Rosalia.

using the irreverent nature of the carnivalesque to represent the idea of the innocence of peasant culture and '[his] desire to exchange the social and historical world of the neorealists for a universe that opens upon the sacred, the mythic, the epic' (Green 1990: 45). Conversely, in Ciprì and Maresco's Last Supper we are faced with a world that we discover to be profoundly cynical and selfish, whose gods are modelled on the Catholic tradition,[193] and where, when their Christ is dragged away, the disciples continue feasting and making merry. Morreale (2003: 22-23) speaks of 'negative' theology – religiosity experienced as the echo of something carnal, archaic, so intense as to be blasphemous.

At the end of *Mamma Roma* the sub-proletarian Christ is reinstated through the image of Mamma Roma's dead son,[194] inspired by Andrea Mantegna's *Dead Christ* (1475-78), and Mamma Roma desists from her intention to commit suicide when she catches sight of the dome of the basilica of San Giovanni Bosco from her son's bedroom window. At the end of *Totò che visse due volte*, by contrast, the sacred is emptied of all meaning, in a crescendo of circumstances, until it becomes the object of mockery: the idiot figure who is forced to climb up onto the cross and masturbate against it, Paletta [Figure 21] who, on his cross, mimes the act of copulation; Fefè who, on his cross, repeats that he has not eaten for two days and asks Paletta whether he is hungry too. The film ends with Lazarus's cry of 'vendetta, vendetta', which confirms 'the Mafia rule of power and violence, the male logic of death, in a world in which even the victory over death [Lazarus's resuscitation by Totò Christ] fails to eliminate the urge towards violence' (Morreale 2003: 23).

[193] For example, the Trinity (the character of Lo zio and the two Mafia dwarfs), the resurrection of the flesh in the finale of *Lo zio di Brooklyn* (Morreale 2003: 20) and the third episode of *Totò che visse due volte*, which directly borrows from episodes of the life of Christ.

[194] Arrested for having stolen the portable radio of a hospital patient, Mamma Roma's son, Ettore, dies in prison of a fever, strapped down to a restraining table while calling out to his mother.

Figure 21: Paletta on the cross in *Totò che visse due volte*

One of the most influential contemporary sociologists writing about the Italian South, Franco Cassano, writes that the anomaly of Pasolini was that he was not 'an apologist for secularisation' as the Italian Left of the time demanded (Cassano 2005). Quoting an interview with Jean Duflot, Cassano observes that Pasolini believed it was highly dangerous to criticise the concept of life as sacred and that he was increasingly 'outraged' by the lack of the sense of the sacred in his contemporaries (Cassano 1996: 129). Cassano urges us to reconsider Pasolini's thinking, highlighting the importance of re-evaluating the capacity of resistance in the sacred without allowing ourselves to become drawn into the irresistible tendency it has to become power, orthodoxy, disciplinarianism and repression (ibid: 133-134). Cassano is not calling for a naïve return to an 'innocent and impossible submissiveness' but for something, as for Pasolini, like a 'desperate desire' capable of acting as a floodgate to what we call progress (ibid: 133) and a form of resistance to the new rules of consumerism (ibid: 128).

In his *Il Pensiero meridiano* ('Southern Thought') (Cassano 1996),[195] a text that has created considerable resonance within Italian academic and public debates, Cassano advocates a new way for the Italian South to revive certain values typical of peasant culture. Cassano's *Southern Thought* is, according to Nick Dines (2013), 'extremely suggestive in the way it positions the idea of the South at the center of geopolitical and cultural debates' posing 'far-reaching questions' and encouraging 'serious reflection'.

Cassano proposes a whole aesthetic based on the re-evaluation of behavioural characteristics that have long been associated with Mediterranean culture, such as 'slowness' and 'sensuality'. According to Cassano, *Pensiero meridiano* aims to accustom one to the idea that a society in which profit is the governing principle and in which everything else is subordinate to it is not healthy: **'**We must go slow and enjoy the pauses to appreciate how far we have come, […] envy the sweet anarchy of one who decides on his path moment by moment' (ibid: 13).

What I would like to consider here is whether, and to what extent, *Pensiero meridiano* is reflected in Ciprì and Maresco's representation of Palermo. The possible connections between this aesthetic and its influences on Italian cinema have been addressed on various occasions.[196] Ciprì and Maresco's cinema, however, though clearly modelled on aspects of the peasant culture discussed by Cassano,[197] does not reflect the characteristics seen by Cassano as an alternative to the dehumanising rhythms of postmodernity. Slowness in Ciprì and Maresco is represented in its most exaggerated and extreme forms for instance the immobile characters like the Sad Man

[195] Published in English as part of *Southern Thought and Other Essays on the Mediterranean* (Cassano 2012).
[196] In 2003 a conference on this topic was held in Lecce. One of the aims was to identify and discuss those cinematic works that reflected *Pensiero Meridiano* in the stories they told and the forms of expression they used, that is to say that intellectual and moral attitude that aims to restore to the South its centrality, autonomy and value, rediscovering its links with the most vital traditions (Castelli 2003).
[197] Discussed in chapter 1.3.3, in relation to the concept of the church tower in peasant culture.

in *Lo Zio di Brooklyn*, who acts as a signpost for funeral *cortèges* and Paletta moving from one side of the frame to the other in *Totò che visse due volte*. In Ciprì and Maresco, slowness, which obliges one to think and to step away from the ever more high-speed rhythms of mainstream cinema, is not linked to the idea of sensuality or the shared pleasures of life, but reduced to an empty 'sign' of a South that is acting out its funeral procession.[198]

In such a context, even though the men show a sense of unity with their bodies, it is hard to see this as a celebration of masculinity. While we could conclude that Ciprì and Maresco have, paradoxically, created a language of beauty, where bodies move with a naturalness that derives from an inner sense of satisfaction with their own corporeal reality, there is no sensuality in these bodies, since the pleasures of sex and food have been reduced to automatised empty acts. One cannot speak of hedonism with reference to these bodies, though they nonetheless recall a certain hedonistic culture, or what remains of a culture in which rounded forms have always held a certain fascination. The pleasure of food has been an abiding pleasure of the South, and Palermo itself has been one of the Italian cities with the highest consumption of foodstuffs (Alongi 1998: 5).

As Morreale observes making reference to Bakhtin, while in Rabelais's world death is placed alongside laughter and eating and life always triumphs over death, it would appear that in modern literature the omnipresent 'healthy totality' of triumphal life is absent and we are left only with bare and desperate contrasts (Morreale 2003: 20). 'In the bodies of Ciprì and Maresco's cinema,' Morreale pertinently concludes, 'there is no salvation, these are not the survivors of a pure and innocent past, but the projection of our own future' (ibid). These 'bare' and 'desperate' contrasts can be seen as confirmation of Pasolini's views on the anthropological mutation of Italian

[198] See chapter 3.2.

society leading to the de-sacralisation of the peasant world and the consequent nullification of its values; a de-sacralisation that, as Cassano observes, citing Romeo Bodei, has produced a 'permanent dissatisfaction that can be placated only through the obsessive search for material wellbeing' (Cassano 1996: 127).

Chapter 3

Identities

Developing issues raised in the previous chapters and focusing on cultural aspects such as the Mafia and religion, this chapter deals with the centrality of identity and its relation to the concept of the 'Other'. I will examine Ciprì and Maresco's use of the mock-documentary and consider the influence of literary texts and the use of Italian subtitles for the Palermitan dialect spoken in their films. In section 3.1, 'Sicilianity', I will discuss a particular kind of Sicilian identity claimed by Ciprì and Maresco, who see *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* as a reflection on Sicilian culture and an homage to the work of Luigi Pirandello. *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* will be analysed with reference to the work of Pirandello, attempting to establish which elements of the film, regardless of the intentions of the authors, can be ascribed to the influence of Pirandello and are relevant to the discussion on Sicilianity. In section 3.2, 'Mafia and Religion', I will focus on the aspects of Ciprì and Maresco's Palermo that recall an autarchic world where the concept of state does not exist. This centres on the fact that the lives of the men in *Lo zio di Brooklyn* and *Totò che visse due volte* appear to be regulated only by the Mafia and certain religious habits. In Section 3.3, 'Dialect versus Italian', I will discuss how dialects have always created issues in Italian cinema, and have often been reduced to mere conventions with little linguistic authenticity. Ciprì and Maresco's *Totò che visse due volte* was one of the first films to subtitle Southern dialects into Italian, establishing the trend for films that followed. Dialect is the main language of the film and Italian is relegated to the language of the Other. This part will be based on a comparative analysis on the use of subtitles for Ciprì and Maresco's *Totò che visse due volte* and *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* and Alessandro Piva's

LaCapaGira / My Head is Spinning (2000), a film set in another Southern region, Puglia, revealing many points of difference with Ciprì and Maresco.

The *questione meridionale*, the 'Matter of the South', where the word *questione* has come to signify 'problem', is a concept on which Italian national identity has been shaped. It was initially used to divert attention away from administrative inadequacies, by creating the image of the individual Southerner whose habits and intellectual abilities were seen as different from those of Northern Italians. After the end of the Second World War and the establishment of the Republic, the Matter of the South took on new characteristics and connotations. The South became above all the poor part of the country in need of financial assistance, thanks to the founding of the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*, a development aid fund, the money from which often ended up in the hands of the Mafia and was used by politicians as a means of getting elected (Ginsborg 1990: 161-2).

The key aspect of Southern Italian identity that has come to the fore since the unification of Italy is a sense of inferiority that emerges very clearly from the cinematic representation of the South. While in Italian literature there have been authoritative voices from the South expressing their distinctive vision,[199] we have had very few equivalent examples in Italian cinema. Films set in the South, even those that are most highly regarded for their artistic integrity, such as Luchino Visconti's *La terra trema / The Earth Trembles* (1948), which tells the story of real fishermen talking their dialects, were made mainly by directors from the North, who looked at the South as the 'other' Italy, perpetuating the image of a backward and detached part of the country. The reaction of directors from the South - much fewer in number than those from the North - to this marginalisation has often been a somewhat

[199] Notable among these writers are: Giovanni Verga, Luigi Pirandello, Tomasi di Lampedusa, Gesualdo Bufalino, Leonardo Sciascia, Vitaliano Brancati and Elio Vittorini.

counterproductive process of de-marginalisation: the drawing in of the outcast South. This has resulted in a tendency to concentrate on the positive aspects of a location still seen by many as backward, leading most of these directors to make films that present a highly positive, idealistic image of the South, with no reference to the very real problems that it has faced.[200]

A strong sense of cultural identity is evident from the start in Ciprì and Maresco's cinema and what we see in *Lo zio di Brooklyn* and *Totò che visse due volte* is a world with no North with the compass point fixed on the South. While in the first two chapters we looked at specific elements of this sense of identity, such as the conservation of memories of the past set against an encroaching present that springs up all around with illegal building, or the critical reading of a traditional macho identity symbolised by the 'cockerel', in this chapter we will deal with the question of identity in a broader sense.

3.1 Sicilianity

The focus of this section is on *Il Ritorno di Cagliostro / The Return of Cagliostro* (2003), a film that, unlike *Lo zio di Brooklyn* and *Totò che visse due volte*, 'joins' Palermo to the rest of Italy since the concept of North is introduced, albeit a North represented more by Hollywood than by Rome and Cinecittà. Another important difference is that, while in the first two films dialogue was kept to a minimum and silence predominated, in *Il Ritorno di Cagliostro* the spoken word comes to the fore, and the characters speak not only the dense dialect of the poor but also the Italian of the middle class, a class completely ignored in the first two films where the focus is on the sub-proletariat.

[200] Emblematic of this is Giuseppe Tornatore's Oscar-winning film, *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso* (1988), which relied on the image of an idealised, nostalgic rural Sicily, making no reference to the Mafia.

The concept of a strongly felt Sicilian identity, *sicilianità*, is often referred to by the two directors. Granted constitutional independence as a region in 1946, Sicily has always made much of the special features derived from its island geography, from the many peoples who through the centuries have ruled it and also from a whole literary tradition. This distinctively Sicilian literary tradition begins with writers like Giovanni Verga (1840-1922), author of the short story *Cavalleria rusticana / Rustic Chivalry*, on which Mascagni's well-known opera (1890) is based, and *I Malavoglia / The House by the Medlar Tree* (1881), a novel on which Visconti based his *La terra trema*, culminating in the work of Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936) and Leonardo Sciascia (1921-1989).

An understanding of the importance of Verga's work is essential to the discussion on Sicily since with *Cavalleria rusticana* and *I Malavoglia* he proposed two different ways of regarding Sicily that have become models for its portrayal in literature, theatre and cinema. On the one hand there is the world made up of knife fights, jealousy-fuelled dramas and machismo, and on the other an image of Sicily worn down by poverty, humble and submissive, governed by religious sentiment.

In this section I will examine the image of Sicily that emerges from the work of Pirandello, as also commented on by Sciascia, whose books set in Sicily have been the subject of numerous film adaptations. [201] In a sense, Sciascia's work represents an extension of Pirandello's, though unlike Pirandello and his other predecessors, he directly discussed literary representations of Sicily,[202] adopting the concept of Sicilianity. Sciascia's Sicily, as portrayed in his novel *Il giorno della civetta / The Day of the Owl* (1961), is a place where crimes are seen by all and witnessed by none and

[201] Among them: *A ciascuno il suo / To Each His Own* (1967) by Elio Petri, *Il giorno della civetta / The Day of the Owl* (1968) by Damiano Damiani, *Porte aperte / Open Doors* (1990) by Gianni Amelio, *Una storia semplice / A Simple Story* (1991) by Emidio Greco.
[202] Sciascia is also the author of a book about Pirandello and Sicily (Sciascia 2001).

the Mafia becomes a sort of unacknowledged government. 'Mafia', a word never mentioned in Verga and Pirandello, becomes a metaphor not only for Sicily but for Italy itself.[203]

The discussion of these aspects is founded on the fact that Ciprì and Maresco have openly acknowledged Pirandello as their inspiration for *Il ritorno di Cagliostro*, and have often in interviews referred to a kind of Sicilianity that draws on certain characters or situations typical of Pirandello's work. The aim here is to examine whether and in which ways *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* can be regarded as drawing on Pirandello and what is meant by Sicilianity. In doing this, issues related to the cinematic adaptation of literary works will be considered given that the film appears to have drawn some inspiration from one of Pirandello's short stories, *La cattura / The Capture*, from the collection *La Giara / The Jar* (1928).

3.1.1 Pirandello's influence

Il ritorno di Cagliostro represents a change of direction for Ciprì and Maresco, while maintaining important elements from the previous films, such as the use of non-professional actors. Palermo, with its old town and extreme outskirts that forms the only possible world in *Lo zio di Brooklyn* and in *Totò che visse due volte*, becomes in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* a city of memory evoked above all through interiors and a metafilmic structure with elements of mock-documentary and B-movie, using a variety of formats from video to cinemascope. In the first two films the main point of reference was Pasolini, whose treatment of the themes of the destruction of the countryside and the loss of individuality in modern society are taken up by Ciprì and Maresco and carried to their most extreme expression. The main point of reference in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* is Ciprì and Maresco's fellow Sicilian, Pirandello, considered

[203] See chapter 3.2.

the greatest Italian playwright of the XX century and author of novels and numerous short stories, as well as being a literary critic and writer of an essay on humour, which will be referred to here.

The possible links with Pirandello will be examined attempting to establish which elements, independently of Ciprì and Maresco's intentions, may be attributed to the influence of Pirandello, and which instead derive from other influences. Various reviews of *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* have referred to it as a 'Pirandellian' film, without however elucidating a term that is open to different interpretations. One exception is Emiliano Morreale's monograph on Ciprì and Maresco, which, thanks also to interviews with the two directors, develops the discussion on the influence of Pirandello and his '*poveri cristi*', 'poor sods', 'an invincible Christian piety, a love for losers and rejects' (Morreale 2003: 32). Citing Gaspare Giudice, Morreale also highlights certain Pirandellian elements that we find in Ciprì and Maresco's films, such as the representation of the point of death as something that transforms people into 'objects of ridicule who gargle, or spit out their false teeth or scandalously empty their bowels inside the bier' (ibid: 34).

Ciprì and Maresco themselves have referred to *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* as Pirandellian, describing it as 'a discourse on the beaten, the losers, on those who, with varying degrees of arrogance or desire attempt to achieve something and then utterly fail' (ibid: 43). While Pasolini's Rome from *Uccellacci e uccellini* is adopted as the model for the oversized sub-proletarian Palermo in the first two films, *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* is set in a *petit bourgeois* environment, with characters bound on a trajectory of self-destruction.

Making use of continuous flashbacks, the film's narrative revolves around the recovery of some old film reels and the activity of Trinacria Cinematografica, a fictitious Sicilian film production company set up in the immediate post-war years

with the aid of the Church and the Mafia. The intention of Trinacria is to rival Cinecittà in Rome, by adopting Hollywood as a model. The story is inspired by the ups and downs of some small film companies based in Palermo and Catania that were launched with great expectations only to fail miserably (ibid: 47). This rivalry with Rome is typical of the immediate post-war period when there was much talk of Sicily becoming independent from the rest of the country and there were even those who advocated Sicily becoming part of the United States, influenced by the large numbers of Sicilian émigrés in America and the extensive commerce established between Sicily and the United States since the late 1800s (Dickie 2007: 235-53). An environment of extreme nationalism is recreated and satirised, above all through showing the mediocrity of Trinacria's efforts, resulting in continuous flops. The name itself is used to satirise this overblown sense of pride: 'Trinakrias', meaning 'triangle', referring to the shape of Sicily,[204] was the name given to it by the ancient Greeks.

The film presents a host of characters who are emblematic of this mediocrity: the La Marca brothers, Salvatore and Carmelo, played respectively by Franco Scaldati and Luigi Maria Burruano, are Trinacria's producers; Cardinal Sucato, an eccentric prelate who supports the ambitions of the La Marca brothers, played by one of Ciprì and Maresco's long-standing non-professional actors, Pietro Giordano, who also plays the role of the director Pino Grisanti; Erroll Douglas (Robert Englund), an alcoholic American actor at the end of his career; Baron Cammarata (Mauro Spitaleri), a devotee of the myth of Cagliostro and financier of Grisanti's film *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* ('The Return of Cagliostro'); and finally a midget professor (Davide Marotta), a surreal figure who acts as narrator in the second part of the film.

[204] After the Greeks, The Romans called Sicily 'Trinacrium', which means 'star with three points'.

The *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* of the title refers to Grisanti's film, a sort of Hollywood style biopic portraying the life of Count Giuseppe Balsamo Cagliostro, a famous charlatan alchemist and magician held in high esteem, who died in prison in 1795. It is a far from casual choice of character, given that he is often seen as a symbol of a certain kind of Italianness associated with the South of the country, characterised by the ability to succeed through ingenuity, frequently by unorthodox or questionable means. Besides, Luigi Barzini, author of a well-known book on Italian national characteristics, comparing Cagliostro to Casanova concludes that the life of Cagliostro is symbolic of 'the reasons why Italians love their own show, why they prefer often to live in their own ambiguous world of make-believe, among *papier maché* reproductions of reality' (Barzini 1966: 99).

Cagliostro in the end becomes the symbol of the business of cinema, the great 'cheat', as embodied in Fellini, whose influence is also evident in the sequences showing priests and nuns dancing together to jazz music in the corridors of the Cardinal's palace [Figure 22].[205] These shots are distinctly reminiscent of the Vatican fashion show in Fellini's *Roma* (1972), where models wear sophisticated and surreal priests' and nuns' clothes in the presence of the Pope and his guests [Figure 23]. Like Fellini, Ciprì and Maresco use such improbable representations not only for humorous or satirical reasons but to play with the audience, reminding them that what they are seeing is just an 'illusion'. This concept of art as illusion, which we have attributed to the neo-baroque nature of Ciprì and Maresco's cinema,[206] is also at the heart of Pirandello's work. Ciprì and Maresco's films all rely on a process of 'estrangement' from the audience, as their films reveal the principles of their own construction, constantly reminding the audience that they are watching a film. It is a practice

[205] The music is composed by Salvatore Bonafede, an admirer of Fellini's composer Nino Rota.
[206] See chapter 2.1.1.

common to a certain tradition of comedy films (Marx Brothers, Monty Python, Mel Brooks, Woody Allen) that in Ciprì and Maresco is taken to extremes. In *Lo zio* we see characters spitting or vomiting into the camera and even addressing the audience, and hear Maresco's voice-over discussing the film with one of the characters.

Figure 22: Nuns dancing together in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro*

Figure 23: The Vatican fashion show in Fellini's *Roma* (1972)

Before discussing the influence of Pirandello in Ciprì and Maresco, we first need to attempt to explain what is meant by 'Pirandellian' as this term is often given different meanings. A work can be defined as Pirandellian, broadly speaking, when it is characterised by one or more of the following features:

- A work that is based on specific ethnic characteristics that are regarded as typically Sicilian, the so-called *sicilianità* that Pirandello's work has or may have contributed to.
- A work in which, as in Pirandello, the themes and characters are representative of the artistic and literary context of the time and conceived as the product of the conflicts and crises of late XIX and early XX century culture.
- A work that, like many of Pirandello's, is self-reflexive and in particular features the play-within-the-play.

The term, however, has been so over-used and misapplied, in a similar way to the term 'Kafkaesque', that over time it has lost focus and Pirandellian is often used for any image or situation that is desperate or twisted.

Sciascia explains the term Pirandellian principally from an ethnic point of view, and as support for his definition of *sicilianità*, or *sicilianitudine* as he prefers to call it. Sicilianity for Sciascia means 'an extreme form of individualism in which the components of virile exaltation and sophisticated disintegration act in duplicate and inverse motion in relation to one another' (Sciascia 2001: 21). According to Sciascia this 'tragic dialectic game' is captured in absolute forms, as poetry, by Pirandello and is based on historical and cultural experience (ibid). Thus Adriano Tilgher's analysis is questioned since, according to Sciascia, Tilgher explains this dialectic relationship by means of the rigid counter posing of Life and Form without regard to the role of the Sicilian experience in Pirandello's life (ibid).

Sciascia contributes to the 'sicilianisation' of Pirandello identifying Pirandello's native town Girgenti, modern day Agrigento, as a catalysing element in the Pirandellian imagination. Even when the author moves away geographically from

Sicily, Sciascia claims, he continues in reality to recount the life of Girgenti (ibid: 43). Sciascia ignores the importance of Pirandello's first experiences in Rome (1887-1889), a Rome that Arcangelo Leone de Castris sees as 'a much more extreme confirmation of the subversion of man's moral values and social alienation' a 'disintegrated scenario' that amplifies to 'monstrous proportions' the components of Pirandello's experience (De Castris 1986: 37).

According to Ciprì and Maresco, *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* is characterised by a Pirandellian humour born out of a profound sense of tragedy, where Sicilianity becomes an obsession, an idea pursued without regard to the consequences, recalling certain Pirandellian characters (Fornara 2003: 21-22). Obsession, therefore, while remaining a component specific to Pirandello, is seen as a typically Sicilian trait. The film, they add, is about obsession, the La Marca brothers' obsession for cinema (ibid). Gesualdo Bufalino writes, not without irony and having warned against the dangers of generalisation, that this destructive obsession, 'sophism lived as passion', resulting in a loss of reason is one of the aspects of the so-called 'identikit of the typical Sicilian' (Bufalino 2001: 1145-46).

The La Marca brothers' obsession is implied rather than represented in the film. The two characters, an homage to certain famous partnerships like that of Totò and Peppino De Filippo in the Italian comic tradition, lack an inner tension, the interior monologue that in Pirandello becomes a 'pure yell' or a 'pointless questioning' (De Castris 1986: 145). Baron Cammarata's obsession for Cagliostro is much more tangible, and he is in fact one of the more successful characters in the film despite his secondary role. Cammarata is more Pirandellian than the La Marca brothers, as is Erroll Douglas, a star whose career is on the wane who finds himself, by a twist of fate, caught up in an absurd and inescapable situation. We learn about Cammarata's sad end - penniless in a lunatic asylum, due to the actions of a rapacious

nephew - in the final part, the Professor's monologue. We learn about Douglas's identical fate by means of the fake documentary in which we see the ex star, old and ill, still afflicted by the shock he suffered as a result of Grisanti's film.

However, even Douglas, a central figure in the story, does not stand out from the other characters and lacks psychological depth and inner life. In fact, even though there are defined characters and a clear narrative, *Il ritorno di Cagliostro*, like the other films, remains a choral piece. Ciprì and Maresco's characters, whether they are played by non-professional actors or by well-known professional actors such as Franco Scaldati, Luigi Maria Burruano and Robert Englund, have a largely symbolic function. It is a process that recalls Pirandello, whose overriding interest, as Leone de Castris observes, is 'the desire to capture in completely independent characters, in their special cases, in a variety of situations, the tragic epiphany of the human condition' (ibid: 139). In Pirandello, however, it is torment that characterises the story, not only because of the interior monologue, but also as a result of the abundance of digressions on small but significant details of the story and the characters. Pirandello's most successful characters are those that end up 'substituting the author', while in Ciprì and Maresco characters remain firmly placed within a fixed logic, in a unified design where the *mise en scene* is organised in a series of *tableaux*.

What unifies Ciprì and Maresco's and Pirandello's characters are certain physiognomic elements. In *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* the enormous bodies of the previous films give way to tics and stammering, individuals filmed in close-up who display the wandering eye of Mattia Pascal in Pirandello's *Il fu Mattia Pascal / The Late Mattia Pascal* (1904) and the drooping nose of Vitangelo Moscarda in Pirandello's *Uno, nessuno e centomila / One, No One and One Hundred Thousand* (1936). The names of Ciprì and Maresco's characters allude too to their physical characteristics or aspects of their personality, a Pirandellian habit but one that has

always been part of the comic tradition: 'la signorina Vaccaro' ('Miss Cowhand'), 'l'onorevole Porcaro' ('The Right Honourable Pig-Keeper'), 'il dottore Conigliaro' ('Dr Rabbit-Keeper'), 'Padre Lo Bue' ('Father Ox'), 'il cardinale Sucato' ('Cardinal Sucked').

As in Pirandello, we are presented with a collection of 'losers' with impossible dreams from a specific historical context, that which precedes the Economic Miracle of the 1950s. What is proposed, therefore, is a Sicilianity that reflects the anthropological changes and transformations typical throughout the country following the Allied landings. The Americans, who represent the exotic element in the film - Douglas is called *scimunito* ('idiot') by the director Grisanti – have left their mark. The La Marca brothers pursue the sirens of Hollywood, the mirages of consumerism, as do their financiers, with the exception of Cammarata.

Rather than obsession, the principal motif of the film seems to be a reflection on 'imbecility' (Morreale 2003: 45). As in Pirandello, there is 'the presence of an expressive will, resolved in the bitter laughter of humour and representing a fundamental need for polemic and pity' (De Castris 1986: 9). In *Il ritorno di Cagliostro*, the polemic is directed at the Church as an institution, seen in connivance with the Mafia. The character of the Cardinal, even assuming he is not based on the much-criticised Ernesto Ruffini, who served as Archbishop of Palermo from 1945 to 1967 and refused to acknowledge the gravity of the Mafia problem in Sicily, is in any case set in the period of Ruffini's ministry.[207]

Priests in the film are characterised by tics, stammering and physical deformities, almost illiterate, as in Sciascia, who saw them as the source of the problems that afflict Italy (Sciascia 1997: 63). As in Pirandello and as the Professor [Figure 24] declares in the final part, the characters in the film, priests included, are

[207] See chapter 3.2.

however, portrayed with pity. After having proposed an entirely different version of the story of Trinacria Cinematografica, in which the La Marca brothers emerge as Mafiosi, the Professor adds 'men who were, without a doubt, almost always reprehensible bastards. And yet, in spite of all this, I feel sorry for them, liking even. Why? Frankly, I couldn't say, who knows? Perhaps because losers provoke in us a certain attraction, a sense of compassion'.

Figure 24: Pirandellian characters in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro*: the midget professor (Davide Marotta)

3.1.2 Pirandello's concept of humour

Pirandello defines humour as an art that through reflection disrupts the image created by an initial feeling, giving way to an opposite feeling (Pirandello 1993: 78) leading to 'bitter' laughter. 'Through this discovery, the humourist sees the painful and serious side, he will deconstruct this construct but not solely to laugh, and instead of mocking, perhaps through laughter will understand and sympathise' (ibid: 90). It is the role played by reflection that renders the perception of contrast, of the 'sense of the opposite' possible. Reflection on grotesque and ridiculous characters triggers profound new feelings and readers like humorous characters, even when their characterisation would not normally lead to leniency.

We could synthesise the concept in terms of a paradoxical situation that is created within the story that leads us to view the facts from an alternative perspective. In the first part of *Il ritorno di Cagliostro*, the comic element predominates - the 'awareness of this sense of the opposite', as Pirandello writes (ibid: 78), in a whole series of gags and scenes based on the mishaps of Trinacria. By contrast, in the second part, in which the character of the Professor is introduced, we move towards humour. Immediately after the incident on the set involving Douglas [Figure 25] (he launches himself from a window after a duel but the mattress intended to soften his landing has been put in the wrong place), the story assumes a tragic mood, and reflection takes over, as a realisation of the reality of the situation comes to the fore.

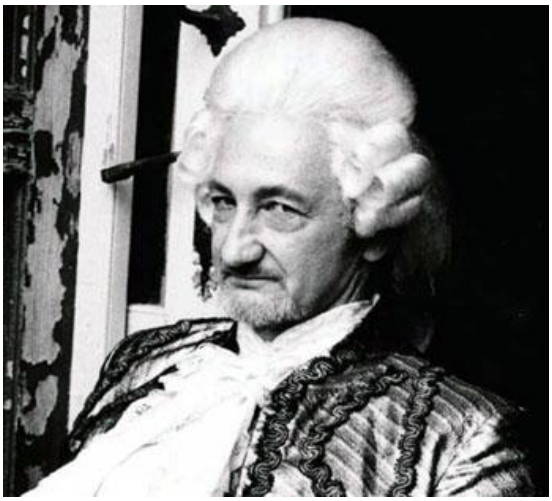

Figure 25: Pirandellian characters in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro*:
Erroll Douglas (Robert Englund)

The La Marca brothers, who in the first part appear as innocuous dreamers, calm and practical Salvatore, forceful and passionate Carmelo, remain the same in the second part. It is the events that change and lead us to see everything in a different light. The twist in the tail in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* does not consist solely in the incident with Douglas, but is also triggered by the appearance of the Professor who suspends the action (the projection of the film we are watching literally stops) and supplies his version of the facts, according to which the Mafia played an important role in the

financing of Trinacria. When the La Marca brothers give in to Douglas' agent's blackmail - whereby he promises not to say anything to Douglas' protector, the legendary mobster Lucky Luciano, about the incident - they do it with the same inertia and opportunism that led them to accept compromises with the Cardinal and the financiers of Trinacria. While before we laughed at their submission to the Cardinal, in the second part the laughter is bitter given that a consequence of the pact between the brothers and Douglas' agent is that Douglas, who we hear screaming in madness and pain in an adjoining room, is locked away in a lunatic asylum.

The passage from one part of the film to the other is marked by specific stylistic choices, such as a different use of the soundtrack. In the first part, standards from American popular music serve to recreate a nostalgic ambience, recalling in the opening titles Kubrick's *The Shining* (1980), releasing a sense of unease, highlighted by the alienating effect of the priests dancing in the diocesan anti-chambers to 'sinful' music. In the second part the piano motif, which accompanies the Professor's reflections, becomes dominant as it returns in different arrangements, and by its cyclical nature communicates an ineluctable melancholy, contributing to the fatalistic and pessimistic vision of the film.

A useful elaboration of the theme of humour is a reference to the short story *La cattura / The Capture* (1918), transposed by Paolo and Vittorio Taviani in an episode of *Tu ridi / You Laugh* (1998) under the title *Due sequestri / Two Kidnappings*. Following on from their work *Kaos* (1984), the Taviani brothers propose an adaptation of some of Pirandello's short stories. These stories are essentially very different from each other but reflect precise criteria. While in *Kaos* the focus was on Sicily, especially rural Sicily,[208] in *Tu ridi* the theme seems to be the

[208] In the first story, 'The Other Son', a woman repudiates her son because she cannot bear the memories associated with the father of the child. In 'Moon Illness', the life of a newly-married couple

'bitter laughter' written about by Pirandello in his essay. The title episode of the film is based on a short story published in 1912. It tells the story of a man who, due to a strange anomaly, that of laughing loudly during his sleep, ends up losing his wife and considering suicide. The episode titled *La cattura*, on the other hand, tells the story of Guarnotta, a cultured but disillusioned old man who falls into the hands of some incompetent kidnappers.

The character from *La cattura*, recalls Erroll Douglas in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro*, an actor in the twilight of his acting career who is also kidnapped by incompetents who don't know what to do with him. The tragic end of the victim of kidnap in *La cattura*, who is allowed to die while the kidnappers try to make up their minds on the form and quantity of the blackmail, is also Douglas' fate, as he ends up dumped in a pigsty, not having yet recovered from his injuries and in the throes of madness.

Ciprì and Maresco treat the kidnappers with a certain leniency, being shown, as in Pirandello, in the details of their daily lives. It is a pitiful vision that draws on a sense of mistrust of humankind characterised by its inability to communicate. It is not only the American star who does not understand, or is not understood, but also the other characters that also fail to understand each other, sometimes speak in an incomprehensible manner or simply do not listen.

Even though Ciprì and Maresco undertake the journey in the inverse - in *La cattura* tragedy gives way to comedy, while in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* comedy gives way to tragedy and however much Pirandello's short story may be seen as a simple reference or narrative coincidence - they stay faithful to the Pirandellian concept of

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is upset as the wife discovers that her husband is an epileptic. 'The Jar' is the story of a huge olive jar that breaks under mysterious conditions. In the fourth story 'Requiem', tenants struggle for their right to bury their dead mother, while the epilogue 'Conversing with Mother' has Pirandello sharing his childhood memories with his mother's ghost.

humour. This faithfulness is not displayed to the same degree in the Taviani brothers' *Tu ridi*, where *La cattura* becomes the story at the centre of a modern-day kidnapping, highlighting modern methods of organised crime and providing the opportunity for comparison with the perhaps more human face of the Mafia of the past.

What for Pirandello is essentially an observation of human nature, of what the author describes as the 'natural imbecility of human kind', in the Tavianis' film becomes social analysis. It is significant that the Guarnotta of the short story, who is described as a lonely old man who spends his days on his farm where the piles of gravel are 'oppressed like him by an infinite, pointless suffering' (Pirandello 1990: 16), in the film becomes Dr Ballarò, an old man characterised by a certain idealism and moral vigour, who plays an important part in the community and knows his kidnappers as his ex-patients. The Taviani brothers make Ballarò a symbol of moral integrity and civic conscience, used as a means of expressing judgement on a poorer class that appears backward and the victim of its own cultural limitations. In Pirandello's story, by contrast, our initial opinion of the lonely old man and his kidnappers is turned on its head: in place of the neglectful treatment that the old man receives at the hands of his family, he is made to feel important by his kidnappers as he fascinates them with his talk of astronomy, the zodiac and the stars:

> to someone who, little by little, came closer, finally sitting beside him, there close to the entrance of the cave, yes actually him, Fillicò di Grotte, who for some time had wanted to know about all those things, even though he wasn't convinced by them and they didn't seem true: the zodiac... the Milky Way... nebulas (ibid: 29).

Seen as a burden by his family, Guarnotta finds new respect among his gaolers, who can't decide what to do with him but can't go back on their actions. In the Tavianis' film the Pirandellian twist in the tail is missing and so therefore is the power to

provoke and make us think. Ballarò performs a pedagogic function in relation to his kidnappers. Only in the finale does he recall Guarnotta, when he dies as he plays with his kidnappers' children. In the Tavianis' story the final drama leaves us with questions, while in Pirandello all is resolved with a 'humorous' reflection on human kind:

> Forever after, if anyone happened to mention Guarnotta's mysterious disappearance in their [his kidnappers'] presence they would say:
> "A true saint! He surely went straight to heaven without stopping"
> Since they knew that he had suffered enough Purgatory at their hands up there on the mountains. (ibid: 35)

3.1.3 A mock-documentary

The play-within-the-play aspect of Pirandello's work can be seen as a further influence on *Il ritorno di Cagliostro*, given the metafilmic characteristics of the film. We need only recall a play such as *Sei personaggi in cerca di un autore / Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921), a play that has become an important reference point for discussions on the self-reflexive nature of art. In the play the audience is confronted with six characters during the rehearsals for a play (one of Pirandello's own) that ask 'to be given life' and be allowed to tell their story. In *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* we have a character, the Professor, who comes from nowhere and asks the audience to listen to his version of the story.

Structurally, however, *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* derives much more from Ciprì and Maresco's experience with the documentary *Enzo, domani a Palermo / Enzo, Tomorrow in Palermo* (1999), an ironic investigation into the activities of a talent agency director in Palermo with Mafia connections. While *Enzo, domani a Palermo* reveals the limitations but at the same time exploits the potential of documentary, putting on screen the out-takes and showing what happens behind the scenes, in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* the continuous movement between the false documentary and

the narrative film creates a play of opposites in which the concept of truth itself is questioned.

Other influences appear to be Woody Allen's *Zelig* (1983), which deconstructs the main elements and conventions of documentary, and above all Peter Jackson and Costa Botes' *Forgotten Silver* (1995), which, like *Il ritorno di Cagliostro*, uses the discovery of lost reels of a film by a forgotten director as a narrative device and recreates the story by means of fake interviews. Even more than *Zelig, Forgotten Silver* – which, on the centenary of the birth of cinema, led parts of the New Zealand public to believe in the existence of Colin McKenzie, a forgotten cinematic genius - is a false documentary, or mock-documentary/mockumentary, as this genre is also known. The intention of the mock-documentary is to hoodwink the audience, in the best examples with a subversive intent (Roscoe and Hight 2001). It is a genre that makes humour a form of resistance against the disengagement of our times, obliging the spectator to play an active role.

The prototype in literature remains Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, which creates sources only then to cast doubt on them. In film, a useful starting point is Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* (1941), with its recreation of a *March of Time* newsreel. In 1949, Welles played Cagliostro in Gregory Ratoff's film of the same name[209] and in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* Baron Cammarata decides to finance the film about Cagliostro to defend Cagliostro's memory because he feels affronted by Ratoff's film.

These references to Welles also bring to mind *F for Fake* (1974), a self-reflexive documentary that offers an account of an art forger and a biographer, both

[209] An excerpt from this film, the only real one among so many fake, appears in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* to support the authenticity of the historic context in which the La Marca brothers move.

examples of people who have fooled experts.[210] In this documentary Welles appears as a magician, recalling the character of the telepath in Fellini's *Otto e mezzo*, and reminds us that every story is both true and false, highlighting the limitations and the incantatory qualities of art and the Cagliostro-like nature of cinema, with its mixture of genius and charlatanism. What Ciprì and Maresco are indicating is how impossible it is for cinema to express the truth and how fleeting truth itself is in its various chameleon and contradictory forms. We are faced with a game of appearances where the two directors first make us believe in one version of the truth and then present another, that of the midget professor. That the second version may be more credible than the first, given the precise references, in documentary style to Lucky Luciano, in addition to using a pedagogical style intersected with the solemn observations of the Professor, is part of the game. Yet another element of dubious believability is however layered over this by the choice of the midget professor as narrator, with his child-like voice he ought rather to be recounting a fairy tale and he is a character associated with fantasy and pantomime. Ciprì and Maresco are playing with us on many levels. As Pirandello maintained, the meaning of life is much more complex than can be represented within the logic of a work of fiction; if the second half of the film therefore detaches itself from the first it is precisely to avoid becoming entrapped in this logic.

The original question of this part was: to what extent can *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* be regarded as Pirandellian and in particular to what extent has Pirandello been significant in determining the way that certain typically Sicilian ethnic characteristics, have been represented? First of all we can affirm that the film itself

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[210] Precursors to mock-documentary date back to radio days and Orson Welles' production of H. G. Wells' novel, *The War of the Worlds*.

could be seen as an adaptation of Pirandello, albeit a particular kind of adaptation. Umberto Eco claims that 'among the infinite forms that this [adaptation] takes there is also that of using a stimulus text as a point of departure, a source of ideas and inspiration to produce one's own text' (Eco 2003: 341). In *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* there is no stimulus text as such, or rather no literary text that performs this function, in spite of elements in common with the short story *La cattura*. It is Pirandello's discussion of humour that functions as the stimulus, producing a form of adaptation that we could define as 'poetic'.

If we bear in mind the 'infinite forms' of adaptation, we can definitely define Ciprì and Maresco's film as Pirandellian, in the same way that Jacques Rivette's film *Va savoir / Who knows?* (2002), which, although it quotes Pirandello, does not propose a textual adaptation, can be seen as Pirandellian. Rivette's film is about an Italian theatre company on tour in Paris with Pirandello's *Come tu mi vuoi* / *As You Desire Me* (1930) and presents a whole series of twist and turns, discoveries and quotations, which are layered one on the other so as to remain entrapped, as the finale of the film itself seems to say, in the 'net' of the theatre.[211] The daily life of the characters does not reflect that of *Come tu mi vuoi*. The words of Pirandello recited each evening of are little use to them. Unable to express their anxieties, the characters remain the victims of the events that carry them along. Pirandello is only one of the references, alongside Goldoni and Heidegger, but it is the twist in the tale at the end, as in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro*, that makes the film truly Pirandellian. In Rivette's film too, a game of illusion is used to provoke the sense of the 'opposite'.

[211] The film ends with a confrontation between the protagonist and a man who has had an affair with the protagonist's partner. After a chase, the two men end on a net like those used in a circus, to then find out that this unusual set is part of a scene in a theatre and that the confrontation is part of a play in front of an audience.

In spite of the narrative coincidences with *La cattura*, *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* does not adapt any single story but encompasses many in a typically postmodern *pastiche*. The two directors, who freely declare their influences, foremost that of Pirandello, are characterised by a highly original approach; original not in the sense of proposing something new but in the way that they re-propose the 'old', deconstructing a whole era of cinema from the post-war period with wistfulness and disenchantment at the same time.

In *Il ritorno di Cagliostro*, it is Pirandello's concept of humour that creates the subversive nature of Ciprì and Maresco's comedy, rather than the device of the mock-documentary, which seems to be utilised more for its narrative strategies aimed at creating a climax, to surprise viewers at the moment of the appearance of the midget professor. The film, in fact, does not aim to create the joke, typical of the best mock-documentaries, but focuses instead on creating that sense of the opposite, which is at the heart of Pirandello's poetics.

Sergio Micheli highlights how film adaptations of Pirandello's works have been largely disappointing (Micheli 1989: 10). They are mostly characterised by a certain timid reverence towards the Sicilian author, which has led to a cautious approach, driven by respect and faithfulness to the source text. For example, in the Tavianis' *Due sequestri*, many elements of the original short story are retained, but it is driven by choices that betray the original intentions of Pirandello. The film text deprives the literary text of its driving force, its sense of the opposite. In addition the Tavianis' predilection for a political intent in their discourse distances us from what Pirandello intended as reflections on human nature.

Il ritorno di Cagliostro looks to Pirandello without being subjugated or revealing a burdensome presence of the text, in a poetic adaptation that confirms that the work of the writer continues to provide a 'vast mine of ideas for the cinema'

(ibid). Despite their declared intentions, Ciprì and Maresco do not seem to have created a film that represents a type of Sicilianity shaped on Pirandello's work. Analysis of the film has shown how, in spite of the points in common with certain elements of Pirandello's narrative works, Ciprì and Maresco's characters lack the inner life that is typical in Pirandello.

We can conclude that, while Ciprì and Maresco more faithfully translate certain aspects of Pirandello compared with authors like the Taviani brothers, this does not mean that they reflect the so-called Sicilianity of Pirandello's work. The preoccupations of Pirandello's characters, like those of Ciprì and Maresco, can more easily be explained by the historical context in which they are placed than by anthropological characteristics. The uncertainties of Pirandello's characters are those of a post-Unification Italy struggling to find its identity, personified in the paradoxes and contradictions suffered by Pirandello's characters, not just the Sicilian ones, while in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* it is the Economic Miracle of the post-war period, and the influence of the American Dream leading many to cut their links with a peasant past, that leads the La Marca brothers to abandon their trade as carvers of religious statues and pursue their dream of becoming film producers, leading to their downfall.

3.2 The Mafia and the Church

Ciprì and Maresco's city-text is placed in counter-position to mainstream models of Palermo as a Mafia City that glamourize the Mafia phenomenon.[212] The main difference to most contemporary Italian cinema is that Ciprì and Maresco search deep into the cultural and anthropological roots of the Mafia, depicting its most brutal aspects in an uncompromising way. They seek inspiration in a certain tradition of *auteur* films, like Francesco Rosi's *Salvatore Giuliano,* and from mainstream Italian American directors such as Francis Ford Coppola and Martin Scorsese.

Ciprì and Maresco are the only directors in Italian cinema to have represented the Mafia as intimately connected with the Church and with a particular way of conceiving religion, delving deeply into aspects that have shaped Sicilian cultural identity. Italian cinema has in fact preferred to ignore a whole history that reveals the close relationship that the Mafia has had from the outset with the Catholic Church. Since 1861, when the Italian State expropriated Church property and the Church refused to recognise the authority of the new Italy, 'much of the clergy were content for the Mafia to mock the authorities' (Varese 2006). It was only in the 1980s that the Catholic Church began to oppose the Mafia. 'Still, bosses in hiding managed to have their children baptised and even marry' (ibid).

Mafiosi have always shown their deep attachment to the Church. When the boss Bernardo Provenzano was arrested in 2006, the police found five copies of the Bible on his desk and on the wall above his bed a picture of Padre Pio, a popular Italian saint (Varese 2006). These strong ties between the Mafia and the Catholic religion were present from the start, from the very first rites of initiation adopted by the Mafia. Borrowed from Masonic societies and imported to Sicily from France around 1820, these initiation ceremonies draw on the symbols, images and prayers of

[212] See chapter 1.1.1.

the Catholic tradition (Dickie 2007: 37). As Roberto Saviano writes, Mafiosi do not see the Christian message as in conflict with their activities: 'Killing is a sin that will be understood and forgiven by Christ in the name of the necessity of the act' (Saviano 2010: 247).

Gaspare Galati, one of the first opponents of the Mafia, recalled a certain Father Rosario, a priest and former Capuchin monk, as having been at the head of a whole religious organisation behind the Mafia clan that had threatened Galati and forced him to abandon his business in the citrus trade and flee Palermo with his whole family in 1875 (Dickie 2007: 32). It should not be forgotten, however, that priests have also been victims of the Mafia and that many of them fought and continue to fight the Mafia through their work.[213]

I will discuss in this section how the Mafia, through its connections with the Church, is presented as the negative side of a culture, of a certain Sicilianity that Ciprì and Maresco condemn, not from a moralist standpoint but rather seeking to lay bare the principal characteristics of a complex social reality that cannot be defined by a simple distinction between good and evil. Besides, given the alarming growth of the Italian Mafias[214] and the establishment and consolidation of international Mafias, the phenomenon has expanded around the globe.[215] With the complicity of large international banks, the Mafia phenomenon has become so complex and sophisticated that it certainly cannot be explained, as it has been for years, by a certain backwardness in Sicily or other regions of Southern Italy, or limited to certain social

[213] Such as Father Pino Puglisi killed in Palermo in 1993 in the Brancaccio area. In 2005 a film by Roberto Faenza, *Alla luce del sole / Come Into The Light* (2005), was released, based on events in Father Puglisi's life.

[214] There are other criminal associations based in other Southern Italian regions, like for instance the Camorra in Campania, the 'Ndrangheta in Calabria and the Sacra Corona Unita in Puglia, all referred to by what has become the umbrella term 'Mafia' (although strictly speaking this refers to the Sicilian or American phenomenon).

[215] 'Mafia' has become the label for a panoply of criminal organisations (Albanian, Chechen, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, Turkish and so on) similar to the Italian Mafia.

classes. What is undeniable is that a certain Mafia culture does exist and despite great efforts it persists in Sicily as in the rest of the country. It is a culture based on the so-called *omertà* that can be summed up in the saying: 'non ho visto niente e non ho sentito niente' ('I have seen nothing and I have heard nothing'), signifying the acceptance of Mafia values and the refusal to collaborate with the Authorities of the State.

3.2.1 From *Salvatore Giuliano* to *GoodFellas*

Francesco Rosi's *Salvatore Giuliano* (1961) was shot in the same towns and with many of the same people that had witnessed the exploits of the bandit Giuliano (1922-1950). The film shows Giuliano as a bandit and a killer hidden in the mountains of Montelepre (Palermo) and later, exploited by the Sicilian separatists during the Second World War,[216] turning political and organising resistance against the Italian authority. It also shows Giuliano's links with the Mafia, his continuous exploits, including robbery and kidnapping and his death in mysterious circumstances.[217]

The real innovation of the film is Rosi's refusal to fictionalise the still-debatable events of the bandit's career. He never shows Giuliano speaking and we never get a good look at his face when he is alive. Rosi found a way of emphasising his rejection of character identification and of the hero worship that generally characterises the storylines of biopics. In fact, if we compare Michael Cimino's film, *The Sicilian* (1987), to Rosi's, we can see how readily Giuliano's life lends itself to being romanticised. Cimino, who cast Christopher Lambert in the role of Giuliano,

[216] Giuliano, like many Sicilians, backed the idea of Sicily becoming one of the USA's states (Chandler 1988: 48-63).
[217] The police wanted it to appear as though Giuliano had died in an exchange of fire but as the film shows, he was in fact killed elsewhere and moved to the location where his body was found.

creates a modern Robin Hood, passionate and courageous like the popular myth, without any attempt to question this portrayal, merely reinforcing it.

In spite of Rosi's rejection of character identification, the film should not be seen as a documentary. Rosi's cinema, especially that of the 1960s and 1970s, is based on a mix of documentary-like characteristics and a portrayal of facts and events that, in contrast, is very dramatic and emphatic. Rosi's film in the end contributed to the myth of Sicily as a land of stark contrast both in its landscape and in the lives and actions of its people, becoming a model for Francis Ford Coppola's *Godfather* trilogy, which makes many references to Rosi's film,[218] right up to Ciprì and Maresco where the references to Rosi's film have a parodic function.

Rosi filmed *Salvatore Giuliano* without the use of artificial lighting drawing on his experience as assistant director in Visconti's *La Terra trema*, a film that aimed to capture the harshness of life in everyday Sicily using local fishermen as actors, speaking their own dialect. The use of natural light in Visconti's film, and the use of fades, serves to create a sombre air, reflecting his vision of Sicily as a land of suffering, perpetual injustices and inexorable fate.[219] *Salvatore Giuliano* is characterised by the stark contrast between the intense Mediterranean sunshine on the one hand, and on the other the mourning black worn by Giuliano's mother and the other women [Figure 26] as well as the deep gloom of the interiors and the badly lit streets of Montelepre at night. These stark contrasts can be explained with reference to Gesualdo Bufalino's dichotomy of light and mourning. According to Bufalino:

> Every Sicilian is, in fact, an unrepeatable psychological and moral ambiguity. Just as the whole island itself is a mixture of mourning and light. Where the

[218] One of the most obvious references is the scene in *The Godfather Part II* (1974) in which the town crier passes through the deserted village at night, banging a drum, making announcements to the villagers.

[219] Even though the film, which is about a fisherman's family's fight for survival, was financed by the Communist party, it is difficult to define it as a Marxist film given that the fishermen's revolt does not lead to anything and in the end they return to what may be regarded as the old order with a clear division between the oppressors and the oppressed.

> mourning is darkest there too the light is most fragrant making death seem incredible, unacceptable. Elsewhere death can perhaps be justified as the natural outcome of biological processes; here it seems scandalous, the act of a jealous god. (Bufalino 2001: 1141)

Figure 26: Mourning in Francesco Rosi's *Salvatore Giuliano* (1961)

Light and mourning in Rosi could be seen as the contrast between blinding sunlight and its effects on people, recalling Camus' *L'Étranger / The Outsider* (2013),[220] and an awareness of mortality, of a life cut short, like Giuliano's, in the vibrancy of youth. Mourning becomes the means of alleviating an atavistic suffering, of an ever-present death in a land where for centuries professional mourners, *prefiche*, had been called to attend funerals. While recalling Greek tragedy, at the same time it overwhelmingly displays the contrast between this culture and the barbarisms of the Mafia, which in Visconti's film is hinted at rather than exposed. In Rosi the Mafia is shown with all its violent and disruptive force, unleashed on the landscape, leaving deep scars on an environment that Visconti sees as still capable of healing its wounds.

Rosi's representation becomes the object of parody in Ciprì and Maresco's kynical cinema. While the women in black in *Totò che visse due volte* recall those of *Salvatore Giuliano*, there is a significant difference: their cries are deliberately fake-

[220] In Camus' novel the protagonist kills a man who appears to be blocking his way on a beach because of his response to the glaring sun beating down upon him.

sounding and brought forth in a mechanical way. It is the opposite of the weeping of Giuliano's mother in Rosi's film. Rosi had imposed a sort of psychodrama on his actors, calling on them to relive the atrocities of their recent past, for instance the massacre on May Day in 1947 at Portella della Ginestra, when Giuliano and his band killed eleven people and wounded thirty-three others (Kezich and Gesù 1991: 54).

The representation of old women in Ciprì and Maresco's as odious mothers played by men and incapable of understanding or love towards their own children, subverts Rosi's world based on the light/mourning contrast [Figure 27]. As discussed in chapter 2.3.3, in Ciprì and Maresco death has no value. The ever-present tension that drives the narrative in Pasolini and loads his scenes with symbolic weight is remorselessly deconstructed in Ciprì and Maresco, demonstrating how death has lost its sacredness. In the same way the myth of the 'good' Mafia as a sort of Greek tragedy, based on the exaltation of death where the hero is drawn towards an inexorable fate, loses all meaning or perhaps had no meaning in the first place, since Ciprì and Maresco represent even the old Mafia as unscrupulous and violent.

Figure 27: Mourning in Ciprì and Maresco's *Totò che visse due volte*

Ciprì and Maresco's preference is not for the blinding sunlight of midday that characterises so many films about Southern Italy, expressing the vitality and exuberance of life, but rather for the softer light close to sunset in which many of their outdoor scenes are shot (Valentini and Morreale 1999: 20-21). Light seems to follow a downward path in their films, from the many exteriors in *Lo zio di Brooklyn* to *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* where dark interiors make up most of the film.

Rosi's film inspired the building of another mythical Sicily in Coppola's *Godfather* trilogy,[221] influences from which can be seen in Ciprì and Maresco's first two films. As in Mario Puzo's novel *The Godfather* (1969), on which the trilogy is based, 'Sicily becomes a legendary place of origins the experiences of which elevate to the status of a hero' (Gardaphe 2003). As Fred Gardaphe writes, this is exemplified best through the character of Michael Corleone. When his father is shot, Michael goes back to his family as 'his ancestral culture's code demands vengeance for his father's blood' (ibid). He then flees to Sicily where 'he meets the characters who embody the new condition of his soul', while the education he receives there 'enables him to take command of his father's kingdom and ruthlessly rule it in an Old World manner' (ibid). In Coppola's film, there is a prevailing need, felt by many Italian American artists, to create a mythology of their origins in which the Sicily that forced them to emigrate, partly because of the Mafia, becomes a mythical land where the Mafia is seen, for better or for worse, at the very heart and foundations of Sicilian culture.

Certain gestures in the characterisation of the protagonists, such as the chin held high and the talking with a closed mouth adopted by Don Vito Corleone played by Marlon Brando in *The Godfather* (1972) [Figure 28], are found in the Mafia boss Don Masino [Figure 29] in Ciprì and Maresco's *Lo zio di Brooklyn*. This affirms the

[221] The three films tell the story of a Sicilian family across the span of the XX century from when they first arrived in United States at the beginning of the century until their return to Italy in the 1980s.

influence that the *Godfather* trilogy has had on the characterisation of Mafia bosses who, in contrast to how they are in real life, are portrayed as individuals of a certain refinement and good taste, so much so that they are often seen as role models by real-life Mafiosi.[222]

Figure 28: Don Vito Corleone (Marlon Brando) in Coppola's *The Godfather* (1972)

Figure 29: Don Masino (Pippo Agusta), centre, in Ciprì and Maresco's *Lo zio di Brooklyn*

[222] An entire chapter is dedicated to this by Roberto Saviano in his *Gomorra* where, among the many examples given, Saviano mentions a boss who even had his villa modelled on that of his screen hero, Tony Montana in Brian De Palma's *Scarface* (1983) (Saviano 2010: 267).

A characteristic of Coppola's trilogy is the importance given to the Catholic religion, as Bondanella states: 'in the trilogy, Catholic ritual becomes an integral part of Coppola's brilliant and very faithful re-creation of Italian American Catholic culture' (Bondanella 2004: 249). The significant difference however is that while in Ciprì and Maresco the links with religion are the subject of satire, in Coppola, notwithstanding that in *The Godfather Part III* (1990) the Church is represented as the source of intrigue and corruption, religious imagery is turned into 'something quite frightening', in 'a new kind of judgement day for the Corleones' enemies' (ibid 249-50). The end of the Corleone family may instead be explained in terms of Greek tragedy since fate does not spare even the gods (the dons). The Corleones, however, do not seem to have been punished by God, as God seems to have forgiven them; thanks perhaps to the large donations they have made to the Church and the poor.

Another Italian American director whose work has influenced Ciprì and Maresco is Martin Scorsese, who they credit as having understood, unlike many Italian directors, Southern Italian or Sicilian culture. While *Raging Bull* was used for the discussion on masculinity in chapter 2.2.2, it is useful here to look at *GoodFellas* (1990).[223] As in Scorsese, in Ciprì and Maresco the psychopathic nature of the Mafiosi is revealed by showing their violent acts as a normal part of their everyday lives. While in the opening sequence of *GoodFellas*, the 'wiseguys' in a car wonder whether they have a puncture or went over a pothole before considering that it may be the body they have in the boot, in *Totò che visse due volte* we see Totò Mafioso dissolving Totò Christ in an acid bath and rather than being worried about God's wrath he is more concerned that his henchmen carry out the superstitious act of touching his testicles with his cane to ward off bad luck. The psychopathic violence in

[223] In *GoodFellas*, Martin Scorsese explores the life of an Irish-Sicilian who grows up idolizing the Mobsters in his neighbourhood in New York. His ethnicity, however, prevents him from becoming an actual member of the 'family'.

both Scorsese and Ciprì and Maresco is recreated in completely different ways: in Scorsese there are gruesome scenes, multiple camera angles and editing virtuosity; in Ciprì and Maresco there is no blood but intensely cruel situations emphasised through long takes.[224] However, despite these differences, which deliver equal brutality, humour serves to create detachment in the audience, to see everything at the same time as a sort of carnivalesque mixture of registers 'comic and scary, pleasurable and repulsive' (Viano 1991: 46).

It is precisely these elements that serve to deconstruct the myth of the 'good' Mafia, which, while it may have retained some credibility when applied to the early years of the Mafia, loses this credibility when applied to the Mafia of today, given that its reputed peasant roots and principles of rustic chivalry were replaced after the Second World War by a ruthless and unscrupulous mind-set focused above all on drug dealing operations. Ciprì and Maresco question the cinematic tradition of Rosi but with what Maurizio Viano defines, in relation to Scorsese, as 'cognitive fury' (Viano 1991: 43-44), meaning that there is still an attachment to, and celebration of, this cinema that, although the target of irony, nevertheless constituted a formative experience for these directors.

3.2.2 Totò Christ and Totò Mafioso

The influence of Rosi, Coppola and Scorsese, helps to frame some defining aspects of Ciprì and Maresco's representation of the Mafia phenomenon and its connections with religion. I will now look at how these aspects are more specifically dealt with in Ciprì and Maresco, focusing on what makes their portrayal of the Mafia unique and thought provoking.

[224] An example of this type of violence, the rape of the angel sequence, is discussed in chapter 1.

In Italian Cinema there is a tendency to see the Mafia as something isolated, like an enemy that, once identified, can be eliminated with the force of law and order, which affects certain parts of the country and is limited to Mafia families or Mafia bosses rather than as a cultural phenomenon. There are few films that portray the Mafia as involved in and influencing the lives of ordinary people. One such example, however, is Paolo Sorrentino's *Le conseguenze dell'amore / Consequences of Love* (2004). The main character of *Le conseguenze dell'amore* is an emotionless middle-aged man, a former financial adviser, always impeccably dressed, whose life has been stolen from him. He is condemned to live in a Swiss hotel, his sole task to transfer money to a local bank, as punishment for an error that cost the Mafia a lot of money. By focusing on a marginal figure, the film leaves us to imagine what kind of terror causes a man to live such a limited existence with no visible coercion.

One of the most original aspects of the representation of the Mafia in Ciprì and Maresco is how it is seen as a part of everyday life, determining people's destinies. We saw in chapter 1 how Palermo, despite being one of the most highly populated Italian cities, is portrayed in Ciprì and Maresco as a closed rural community where the family structure is continuously recreated and everybody knows each other. These observations lead to a parallel with Palermo's 'lived' city that still, and to some extent, preserves certain forms of peasant culture. We could argue that this closeness represents at the same time a clear model of a Mafia-controlled society mirroring, in a carnivalesque way, modern-day Palermo where Mafia bosses continue to exercise their power through extortion of local businesses and activities.

Ciprì and Maresco's Palermo is exclusively ruled by Mafiosi who act as godlike figures in a cityscape strongly characterised by the catastrophic consequences of building speculation brought about by the Mafia itself. The story of *Lo zio di*

Brooklyn and the actions of most of the characters are influenced by the desires of unscrupulous Mafia bosses. Although fragmentary and episodic, the film is structured around two interconnected axes that on the one hand revolves around the war between the Mafia boss Don Masino and the two dwarf Mafia bosses, and on the other presents the life of a family that, while not involved in any kind of Mafia activity, meekly agrees to take care of a mysterious old man when asked to by the dwarf Mafia bosses.

In the first episode of *Totò che visse due volte*, the penniless Paletta pays with his life for having stolen a miniature portrait of a Mafia boss's mother from a votive niche, his corpse displayed in place of the *ecce homo* in the same niche. In the second episode, the figure of the Mafia boss is replaced by a violent bullying brother, who beats his homosexual brother and his brother's lover. In the third episode the figure of the Mafia boss returns as the most terrible and cruel of Ciprì and Maresco's characters who thinks nothing of dissolving his victims in acid. As far as *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* is concerned, we discover in the second part of the film that the Mafia, in fact the legendary figure of Lucky Luciano, through a series of crimes and misdemeanours, are behind the affairs of Trinacria Cinematografica.

In all three films the figure of the Mafia boss, or his substitute (as in the second episode of *Totò che visse due volte*), is the one who moves the narrative on in stories that are otherwise static and little seems to happen, as in *Lo zio di Brooklyn*, or resolves complex narrative situations, as in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro*. The centrality of the Mafia boss is also due to the fear and respect that the other characters feel towards this figure. What most characterises the Mafia boss, in fact, is a boundless narcissism that leads him to see himself as a superior human being.

The representation of these characteristics clearly has a derisive intent. The bosses' way of moving and speaking, in particular Don Masino in *Lo zio di Brooklyn*,

recalls, as already mentioned, the solemnity and the obsession with power of the bosses in Coppola's *Godfather* trilogy. Don Masino's greatness is confirmed to him by his victims even in their last moments of life. In one scene Don Masino decides to punish the two henchmen who had been charged with getting rid of the two dwarf bosses and failed, by tying them to a chair and expressing his anger by singing them a Neapolitan song. Once he has finished the two unfortunates shower him with compliments on his singing abilities while he continues to threaten them.

Another example of the exaggerated solemnity of the bosses' gestures appears in the first episode of *Totò che visse due volte*. We see the bosses all lined-up in a row and, when the accordion-player starts playing, they move off slowly and solemnly accompanied by the music, which seems to provide them with a leitmotif. Meanwhile a small crowd gathers near a votive niche, watching as the boss places a necklace with his mother's photo in the niche and observing in loud voices how fond of his mother the boss was.

In real life, too, Mafia bosses have tended to display messianic tendencies, presenting themselves as men whose actions, however violent and dishonest, are aimed at establishing peace. One of the last messages Provenzano wrote, before his arrest, ends: 'I salute you and thank you with all my heart. Let God guide us to do good deeds for everybody' (Varese 2006). Saviano highlights how the most charismatic bosses 'often consider their acts as a kind of self-sacrifice, burdening their own consciences with the pain and weight of sin for the good of others, the men over whom they hold sway' (Saviano 2010: 248).

Fear of the bosses is accompanied by fear of divine retribution. In the brothel sequence, in the first episode of *Totò che visse due volte*, the laughter of the men waiting to have sex is silenced by the sound of thunder, which reminds them of a

vengeful god ready to punish them for their wrong-doing and in fact the scene ends with the clients of the brothel being set upon by a band of robbers.

However, the bosses' law prevails over God's law as the third episode of *Totò che visse due volte* demonstrates. In this episode the Mafia boss, Totò, is confronted with his alter-ego, a Christ-like figure of the same name and played by the same actor.[225] In the film the two Totòs become the two halves of the same reality inseparable one from the other. At the end, Totò Christ [Figure 30] can do nothing to stop Totò Mafioso [Figure 31] and, resigned to his fate, he too ends up dissolved in the acid bath.

Figure 30: Totò Christ

[225] Totò is the abbreviated form of Salvatore or 'Saviour'.

Figure 31: Totò Mafioso

The episode of the two Totòs recalls a Roberto Benigni film, *Johnny Stecchino* (1991) about the Mafia and mistaken identity and a novel by Italo Calvino, *Il visconte dimezzato* / *The Cloven Viscount* (1980), which tells the story of a man cut in half by a cannonball during the Turkish-Christian war. In Benigni's film a school bus driver meets a woman who sets him up so that her mobster husband, who looks just like him, can escape. The two halves, here, are to be seen as a clear distinction between good and evil, almost as though to represent the profound divide between two very different ways of being Italian. In Calvino, on the other hand, we see how the parallel stories of the two halves of the Viscount come to life as he returns from the war. Initially the evil half returns to the village, capable of great atrocities but also displaying a strong sense of realism. Later the other half returns and exhibits the complete opposite behaviour: kind, altruistic and so saintly that he proves unattractive to the woman he is in love with. Calvino is targeting above all a certain moralism typical of Italian society by wilfully confusing the line between good and evil and highlighting how a simple application of rules and conventions is often at the heart of how we relate to others rather than a genuine attempt to understand and establish a dialogue.

Ciprì and Maresco, unlike Benigni, do not seem to be interested in a discussion of good and evil but rather in representing two cultures, one associated with traditional Catholicism and the other with the Mafia, the former however being dependent on the latter. Through their Totò Christ figure, Ciprì and Maresco direct their vitriol at the Church, as though to say that being good at all cost has become a sort of label, a meaningless rule, and it is no coincidence that in the film Totò Christ himself tries to step outside his burdensome role and become more human. While in Calvino the good character is happy with his goodness and does not suffer from doubts, in Ciprì and Maresco the good character tends to rebel against the role assigned to him, performing arbitrary miracles but ignoring the suffering of a hunchback Judas who continually asks him to rid him of his hump. Totò Christ suffers an unfortunate fate however, as having made the mistake of reviving Lazarus who had been dissolved in the acid bath, he himself falls into the hands of the Mafia boss and his own disciples do nothing to save him as they are more interested in having a good time and an easy life.[226] In Ciprì and Maresco on the one hand we have the representation of a cruel power-crazed Mafia that spares no one and not only takes on the gods but actually tries to take their place; on the other the representation of a religion in which Christ is made exactly in the image of the men he should be saving but who neither he nor his disciples could care less about. Their religiosity is exclusively made up of empty gestures such as joining their hands in an attitude of prayer and wearing monks' robes.

[226] This representation of Christ has been the source of controversy for Ciprì and Maresco. The members of the Italian censorship board judged *Totò che visse due volte* as an 'offence to religion' proving how appropriate Calvino's irony was against a certain typically Italian moralism. People, whether religious or not, might well be offended at the representation of Christ as an irascible old man. The film was initially offered State funding as a work of artistic and cultural merit but this was later withdrawn. Ironically, however, after the polemic caused by the film, the board's powers were limited to monitoring films solely for the protection of minors.

3.2.3 Lucky Luciano and the Cardinal

In *Il ritorno di Cagliostro*, where historical references are more precise, Mafiosi and high officers of the Church are the objects of satire, brought together by greed and depicted as being as ignorant as they are unscrupulous. Here the more general satire of the first two films becomes more focused and is directed towards specific Mafiosi, like Lucky Luciano, and officers of the Church, like Cardinal Ernesto Ruffini.

The change in register in the film between the first and second parts, which moves from comedy to tragicomedy, highlights the cruelty of the Mafia, its entrenchment in Sicilian culture and its effect on the lives of ordinary people who, through their silence, end up becoming accomplices of the Mafia. While the first part of the film shows the two brothers' adventure in the world of film, above all as a personal quest in which they try to realise their dream with the help of the Church and financial institutions, the second part introduces the figure of Lucky Luciano and the story is seen from a completely different perspective, as a Mafia affair, one of the many in which the Italian American Mafia of the time was mixed up. The latter had played an important role during the Allied Landings and had exploited the situation to consolidate its position in Italy, which had suffered during the Fascist period.

Even though Ciprì and Maresco claim to have been inspired by events in the history of small Sicilian production houses that were set up immediately after the Second World War, there is no actual evidence of the Mafia's involvement in these concerns. In fact while the involvement of the Mafia in American cinema is well documented,[227] we know little of their involvement in Italian cinema.

[227] An account of these links is provided by Tim Adler in his *Hollywood and the Mob* (2008).

Notwithstanding this, the introduction of Lucky Luciano renders the events of the film's narrative quite realistic, in view of Luciano's keen interest in cinema.[228]

Charles 'Lucky' Luciano, born in 1897 in Sicily, emigrated to New York in 1906 and by 1935 he was known as The Boss of Bosses. He was sentenced to thirty to fifty years for extortion and prostitution but after his conviction, the USA government offered him a deal: deportation to Italy in exchange for his assistance in the Allied invasion of Sicily. The years Luciano spent in Italy provided for much speculation and gave way to the myth that he was involved in everything that mattered in Italy at that time and had links with very powerful and influential politicians.

Luciano's post-war exile in Italy also inspired Francesco Rosi's *Lucky Luciano* (1974) where to some extent Rosi tries to question the Luciano myth. In contrast to what Rosi did with *Salvatore Giuliano*, here the protagonist, played by Gian Maria Volontè, is glamourized, contributing to the image of Luciano as a cunning and clever man, almost a superior human being resembling the dons in Coppola's trilogy.

In Ciprì and Maresco we hardly see Luciano at all. We are mainly told that he is behind the events of Trinacria Cinematografica. It is however this absence that makes Luciano's image even more terrifying. In the finale the film proposes a series of horrendous murders ordered by Luciano, highlighting his cruel personality through this power over life and death, as in the case of the other bosses in Ciprì and Maresco's films, but he never shows himself and is therefore more powerful.

As discussed in chapter 3.1, the mock-documentary nature of this second part of the film was meant to question the approach to the Lucky Luciano myth and more in general to a whole trend in Italian cinema of representing the Mafia. This trend takes the documentary as a pretext for proposing something objective, like a

[228] According to Tim Adler Luciano had always loved cinema. He even wrote a screenplay, in which he portrayed himself as an innocent victim, and approached several producers in an attempt to get it made into a film, before his death in 1962 (Adler 2008: 112).

guarantee of scientific truth, while often on the contrary these films propose a superficial or extremely ideological approach to the topic.[229] What is evident in Ciprì and Maresco's film, as in Rosi's *Lucky Luciano*, is how the character of Luciano is used symbolically in order to reveal the complexity of Italian politics and society.

In Ciprì and Maresco the introduction of the character of Luciano serves, as well, to raise some awkward questions about the relationship between the Mafia and Italian cinema. A similar intention is shown in Ciprì and Maresco's documentary *Enzo, domani a Palermo*, which deals with the involvement of the Mafia in contemporary Italian cinema. While in the documentary evidence of this association is gathered, in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* insinuations are made about this relationship, which could be behind real events more than we imagine.

Contextualising the Mafia in a specific historical period in their third film allows Ciprì and Maresco to go beyond the representation of the phenomenon in the first two films as something static and ineluctable that has always characterised Sicilians and has no ties with the rest of the country. While on the one hand *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* seems to confirm many aspects of a certain Sicilianity that Ciprì and Maresco themselves tend to emphasise, on the other it places everything in a much wider context in which Sicily, as Sciascia (1997) had also suggested, becomes a metaphor for Italy.

The treatment of the figure of Cardinal Ernesto Ruffini is very different to that of Lucky Luciano. This controversial Cardinal is known for having said: 'there is a lot of talk about Mafia but they are just common delinquents, the same as exist everywhere' (Deliziosi n.d.). He also published a pastoral letter in which he writes

[229] At the Venice Film Festival in 2003, at the screening of *Il ritorno di Cagliostro*, Ciprì and Maresco denounced this trend in Italian cinema and, as a result, some critics compared the film with another at the festival focusing on the Mafia, Paolo Benvenuti's *Segreti di Stato / Secret File* (2003), which used a documentary approach to reconstruct the events relating to Salvatore Giuliano at Portella della Ginestra. Ciprì and Maresco later made it clear however that their statements were not directed in any way at Benvenuti's film (Morreale 2003: 18).

that the Mafia is made up of 'gruppi di ardimentosi', 'hotheads', adding that Sicily is the birthplace of many illustrious men but it is unfortunately let down by people like Danilo Dolci, referring to a highly intellectual figure, internationally recognised for his fight against the Mafia, who spent most of his life helping the poor of Sicily and was referred to as the 'Sicilian Ghandi' (ibid).

Significantly, the role of the Cardinal was assigned to Pietro Giordano, one of the most well-known faces in Ciprì and Maresco's cinema, who spent many years of his life as a beggar in the environs of Palermo's churches. The choice of Giordano, a real life church beggar, to play the part of a high ranking officer of the Church adds a satirical element in a carnivalesque transvestism, which Ciprì and Maresco also employ in the choice of patients from a mental institution in Palermo to play the part of doctors in a mental institution in the same film.

The provocative nature of this choice can only be grasped by those who know about the personal lives of Ciprì and Maresco's actors. There is, however, an emblematic aspect to the progress of the actor Giordano in Ciprì and Maresco's work to be borne in mind when we consider their *œuvre* as a whole, including the previous two films and above all their sketch work for television. In fact, it is a characteristic of Giordano that he has personified all that is lowest and basest in the material world including an iconically memorable personification of excrement.

The Cardinal is thoroughly desecrated by Giordano's convincing portrayal of him, depicted as ignorant and arrogant, continuously offending his subordinates and his old mother, depicted as a smelly old woman (as usual, in Ciprì and Maresco, played by a man), who he detests and despises. These traits are so typical of Ciprì and Maresco's cinema, who also add a strongly Sicilian element to their characterisation, that it is difficult to imagine that they had based this character on Ruffini, who although he had spent many years of his life in Sicily was in fact originally from the

North of Italy. Nonetheless, the fact that the historical periods of Sucato and Ruffini coincide, renders the comparison to Ruffini inevitable.

The character of the Cardinal is without a doubt the most ferociously satirical directed towards a man of the Church in the whole history of Italian cinema, which, notwithstanding the satirical prowess of the *commedia all'italiana* in the 1960s and 1970s, has nevertheless been very careful not to attack ecclesiastical figures. Even when it is not a question of satire but simply of condemning the behaviour of the Church, there has been a certain reticence. In *The Godfather Part III*, for example, the image of corrupt priests capable of killing[230] is compensated by the highly positive images of other ecclesiastical figures, who are represented almost as saints, such as the character inspired by Pope John Paul I.

We have seen, in chapter 3.1, how priests end up becoming the targets of Ciprì and Maresco's humour, a Pirandellian humour that has certain elements of commiseration and an understanding of human nature. It is no coincidence that in his essay on humour, Pirandello selected as an example of his concept the figure of Don Abbondio, a mean and subservient priest who in Alessandro Manzoni's novel *I promessi sposi / The Betrothed* (1983) does not hesitate to refuse to perform a wedding ceremony so as not to disobey a local noble.

Pirandello highlights how in becoming a priest Don Abbondio has not given any consideration to the higher aims of the calling but was more simply attracted by the fact that it would enable him to live a comfortable life and to attain a more elevated social position (Pirandello 1993: 88). In order to more fully understand how little respect the clergy has earned in Italy, those in the South in particular, it is

[230] Coppola sought inspiration in the history of the Mafia in the 1980s: the suddenness of John Paul I's death, the scandals at the Vatican Bank Banco Ambrosiano, the body of a Vatican banker, Roberto Calvi, found hanging from Blackfriars Bridge in London.

helpful to refer to Gramsci's writings, for example his *Quaderni del carcere / Prison Notes* (2001), where he conducts a social analysis of the Italian clergy, concluding:

> In the North the clergy is of working class origin (artisans and peasants), whereas in the South they derive more from a noble class of 'gentlemen'. In the South and in the Islands either as an individual or as the representative of the Church, priests are often large landowners and are open to usury. They often appear to the peasant both as spiritual leader and as a landlord exacting his pound of flesh and who can rely both on temporal and spiritual powers to obtain his ends (Gramsci 2001: 66).

Ciprì and Maresco's satire of the clergy is not only directed towards highlighting their pastoral limitations and lack of humanity but also their great responsibilities. While in the first two films the Mafia and the Church become the two faces of a single culture in which the Church is subjugated to the Mafia, in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* even if it is the shadow of Luciano who decides the destiny of the characters, there is a damning condemnation of the corruption of the Church and its active role in participating in illicit financial dealings. In the first part the Cardinal is a rather two-dimensional character, while in the second he becomes a disturbing figure. His dishonest and hypocritical nature emerges clearly in a scene during a party in which Baron Cammarata, who had provided the production financing for *Il ritorno di Cagliostro*, asks the Cardinal what has happened to his money and the Cardinal carries on dancing with his mother, pretending not to hear the question.

The relationship between the Mafia and religion, and the Mafia and the Church, are perhaps Ciprì and Maresco's most important satirical targets. To sum up, we can conclude that while in the first two films the Mafia reigns supreme and is part of a static and immobile world, having complete control over the lives of its inhabitants, in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* it gains a historical dimension, in which the changes that occurred in Italian society in the after-war period and the victory of the Allied forces are taken into account.

While, as previously observed, the American dream caused considerable change in Italian society in its transition from a rural to an industrialised country, it was also of great significance in the consolidation of the Mafia. After their exile in the United States during Fascism, many Mafiosi took advantage of the confusion in the newly formed Republic and with the support of politicians and the Church were able to re-insert themselves into the fabric of Italian society. What should be noted is that, notwithstanding the static representation of an enclosed world that recalls the past, in reality Ciprì and Maresco present an image of the Mafia that reflects many aspects of contemporary society in which the sacred dimension has been lost and the value of human life is constantly diminished. The heartfelt cries of the women in Rosi's Salvatore Giuliano give way to the mechanical and empty wailing of the women in Ciprì and Maresco's films. The Mafia forms part of everyday life for Italians and often determines the course of their lives, with terror and fear regulating society at a much deeper level than is often acknowledged.

3.3 Dialect versus Italian

Standard Italian still represents for many Italians a second language while their first language remains what is usually called 'dialect'. This is true not only in remote villages but also in cities like Palermo where the pronunciation and the vocabulary of the local dialect can vary from one quarter of the city to another. The focus of this section is on the use of dialect in Ciprì and Maresco's cinema through an analysis of the subtitling of *Totò che visse due volte* (1998) and *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* (2003), comparing them to Alessandro Piva's *LaCapaGira / My Head is Spinning* (2000), which is set in the Southern region of Puglia, and making reference to other films by contemporary directors. The discussion on linguistic identity will be applied from a broader perspective and in the context of Italian regional identities, since the films considered all employ dialect almost exclusively throughout while Italian is used only in particular circumstances and by a limited number of characters. The main focus will be on what the tension between dialect and Italian reveals about issues of identity, bearing in mind in each case how the use of dialect is directed; for instance, in the case of Ciprì and Maresco, it is aimed at preserving what is left of a culture strongly rooted in peasantry.

3.3.1 The subtitling of dialects in Italian cinema

The only notable case of an Italian film subtitling dialect before the 1990s is Ermanno Olmi's *L'albero degli zoccoli* / *The Tree of the Wooden Clogs* (1978), a film set between 1897 and 1898 in the Bergamasco area of the north of Italy, which deals with the everyday life of a peasant family.[231] Interestingly, Luchino Visconti chose not to use subtitles in his film *La terra trema* / *The Earth Trembles* (1948), using instead a

[231] The film consists of a series of documentary-like vignettes in which Olmi focuses on the incidents that make up a year in the life of four peasant families who work on the same farm. Their lives are dominated by the struggle to survive the vagaries of nature.

voice-over to explain the life of the poor Sicilian fishermen who speak their dialect throughout the film. Not even Pasolini opted to use subtitles in his first two films, *Accattone* (1961) and *Mamma Roma* (1962), set in the *borgate* of Rome. He chose instead to italianise the dialect spoken, as he also did with his first two novels, *Ragazzi di vita* (1955) and *Una vita violenta* (1959).

Since the early 1990s, subtitling dialects into Italian has become an established practice with filmmakers based in the South. The precursor of this new wave of films, which, like those of Ciprì and Maresco, are usually set in urban environments and focus on people living on the margins of society, is Antonio Capuano's *Vito e Gli altri / Vito and the Others* (1991). What this film displays, particularly through its controversial depiction of Neapolitan children, is a critical approach to its environment, a process of self-discovery through which the local dialect becomes the predominant language in the film. How this predominance of the local dialect emerges, enhanced by the way subtitles are used, is one of the issues addressed in our analysis of Ciprì and Maresco's subtitled films and Piva's *LaCapaGira*.

La questione della lingua, the 'Question of Language', in post unification Italy has always been a contentious issue, since the country needed a language that could reduce instability and become a common language for all Italians. Even today there is controversy in Italy about language differences, arising in part from the fact that there remains considerable variation in the way that the standard language is spoken. These variations are mainly determined by the dialects spoken in the different areas. According to Fromkin *et al.* (2003: 445), 'a dialect is not an inferior of degraded form of a language, and logically could not be so since a language is a collection of dialects.' Martin Maiden and Mair Parry (2014: 2) suggest, however, that the definition 'Italian dialects' needs to be clarified, as the Italian language is in fact a

'continuation of one of the dialects'. Historical, social and political factors have played an important part in the standardisation of Italian and went through different stages before the Florentine dialect was chosen as the standard form.

To understand the importance of dialects in Italy, a study carried out by the linguist Tullio De Mauro (2011) provides a useful starting point. This study reveals the profound extent of the disunity of the Italian language, showing that in 1861, the year of Italian unification, only 22 percent of Italian society was literate and that 80 percent of the population had had no contact with the dialect chosen to be the national language. Furthermore, it emerges that of twenty-five million citizens only 2.5 percent could speak Italian (De Mauro 2011: 43). This shows the great difficulty for many Italians in acquiring knowledge of the standard form of language, even as late as the mid-XIX century. Italian therefore had to undergo a process of formalisation so that the standard language could be widely available to all citizens who were mostly speaking in their own dialects. However, since the unification of Italy, Southern dialects have been discriminated against. While words from Northern dialects were included, words from Southern dialects were more often excluded from the dictionaries of the newly formed country.

In a country of such rich and varied linguistic traditions, resulting from the many different colonising cultures that have influenced its development throughout its history, linguistic diversity has often been reduced by Italian cinema to a set of linguistic conventions. Paradoxically, even though Palermo, together with Naples, is the southern Italian city most commonly represented in films, its dialect has often been domesticated[232] or even replaced by that of Catania, which, as a result, has

[232] 'Domestication' is taken from Lawrence Venuti's definition of a strategy that refers to an ethnocentric accommodation of the foreign text to the target language cultural values, as the opposite of 'foreignisation', which instead 'resists the dominant values in the receiving culture' and aims to emphasise the 'foreignness' of the source text' (Venuti 2008: 19).

become the standardised Sicilian found in many mainstream films. This is perhaps due to the fact that the pronunciation of the Palermitan dialect is among the hardest to understand of the Sicilian dialects. Similarly, all the rich and varied dialects of Puglia, which differ greatly from the South to the North of the region, have been reduced to the parody made by a famous comedian, Lino Banfi, who characterises the Apulian dialect as a misspoken form of Italian (e.g. the vowel 'e' replacing 'a'), a sort of made-up language that bears no relation to the Bari dialect spoken, for instance, in *LaCapaGira*.

For the Italian audience, the use of dialects in a film often creates connotations of it being an art-house film. The situation is due in part to the influence of neorealism, which is associated with its use of dialects, but also to the fact that it is principally art-house films that are subtitled rather than dubbed in Italy, reinforcing the perception that these are films intended for a select public. From the very early days of sound, Italy has been a dubbing country. The official Fascist policy allowed only dubbed versions of foreign films to be screened, in an attempt to implement Italian as the standard language in a country where dialects were still spoken by the majority (Sorlin 1998: 10). In any event, subtitling would not have been feasible in 1930s Italy, in view of the still high percentage of illiteracy. In post-war Italy, even when literacy vastly improved, the practice was kept alive by a monopoly of skilful practitioners who often kept the business strictly within the family, managing to control the market well into the 1970s when, with the advent of private television, an increasing number of dubbing companies established themselves in Rome and Milan.

Whether the subtitling of *Totò che visse due volte*, *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* and *LaCapaGira* hindered their box office performance is hard to assess. Ciprì and

Maresco's first film *Lo zio di Brooklyn* (1995) was not subtitled although, of their three films, it is the one that makes the most uncompromising use of dialect and is the hardest to follow due also to the fact that the film is to some extent plotless. Despite a certain critical success, the film did not do well at the box office and nor did *Totò che visse due volte*, even though it was subtitled. Things improved with their third film, *Il ritorno di Cagliostro*, which, although it made use of subtitled dialect, involved considerably more use of Italian. Piva's film, *LaCapaGira* [Figure 32], was a local box office success when it was released, with no subtitles, in Bari, the city where the film is set. However, when the film went on wider release, subtitles were used. Piva's second film *Mio cognato* / *My Brother in Law* (2003), again set in Bari, is more mainstream and arguably it is no coincidence that there is no use of subtitling, although this choice can in part be explained by the fact that this time the main characters are more middle class (as in Ciprì and Maresco's *Il ritorno di Cagliostro*) and therefore more likely to speak Italian or an Italianised dialect.

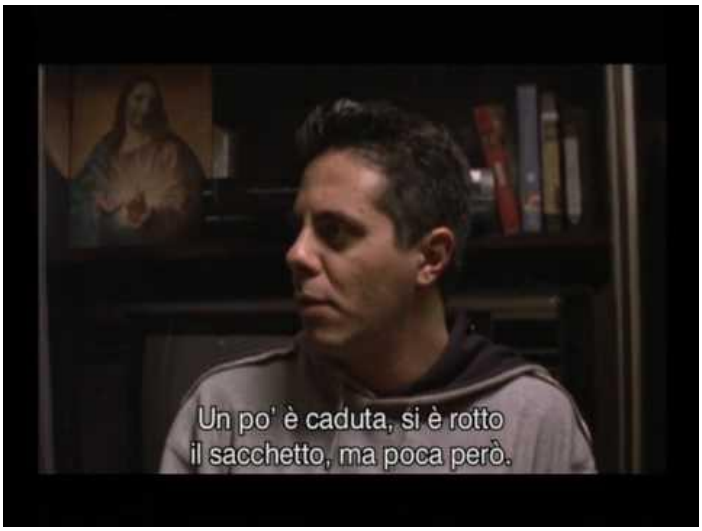

Figure 32: Subtitles on Alessandro Piva's *LaCapaGira* (2000)

In Ciprì and Maresco's subtitled films and in *LaCapaGira*, subtitles combine with the images and the soundtrack to create different layers of signification. Humour is an important element in this and the way Italian is mocked is a key part of this humour,

confirming the cultural predominance of the dialect source language. This can also be seen in the way Italian is used in the subtitles, as a key to understanding the dialect rather than a tool to transpose it. Humour is combined with strong language and is centred around the themes of sex and food in *Totò che visse due volte*'s apocalyptic vision of society, around bitter reflections on human beings in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro*, while *LaCapaGira* is more focused on the effects of postmodernity in a society in which traditional values still exist. In *LaCapaGira*, Bari is represented as a nocturnal city that leads a double life, where the continuous movement of 'merchandise' from the outskirts to the centre includes the trafficking of illegal immigrants as well as packages of drugs. The story follows Mafia henchmen Pasquale and Minuicchio as they wait for a consignment of drugs by the side of a railway line but fail to retrieve it, angering their boss who needs to supply the merchandise to a local games hall. Pasquale and Minuicchio finally manage to get hold of the package of drugs and deliver it to its destination only for it to be stolen by a pair of delinquents.

My analysis of *Totò che visse due volte*, *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* and *LaCapaGira*, reveals the following:

- We are not presented with 'the version from a text A in a verbal language Alpha into a text B in a verbal language Beta' (Eco 2004: 1); but of a text A, mostly in dialect, supported by a text B, the subtitles in Italian;
- Text B translates Text A very literally and does not attempt to render idiomatic expressions of text A into an equivalent in language B. In other words we experience a dialectisation of the Italian that aims to help the audience to appreciate certain expressions that otherwise may be lost in translation.

In contrast to approaches that aim to make the work of the translator invisible (Venuti 2008), facilitating the spectator to completely ignore the language of the source text, the films discussed here require the spectator not only not to abandon the source language but also to engage with it. Clearly not all the members of the audience can understand the dialect, but by demanding a more active role from the spectator, they are enabled to enter the world represented in the film. Ciprì and Maresco's cinema shapes its own spectator as an active interpretant, inducing him/her to follow a formative itinerary, a journey in Ciprì and Maresco's Palermo, but also, by revealing the principles of their own construction, constantly reminding him/her that they are watching a film. As discussed in chapter 3.1, we see characters looking into the camera, at times even addressing the spectators, and hear, as *in Lo zio di Brooklyn*, Maresco's voice-over discussing the film with one of the characters.

There is no attempt in either film to render idiomatic expressions in an equivalent in Italian and Italian is often 'foreignised' in order to retain the sense of the dialect as much as possible. For example, in a scene in a brothel in *Totò che visse due volte* where robbers ask the men to 'bring out' (hand over) the money, the subtitles translate into Italian 'esci i soldi', which is a very literal translation from the dialect 'esci li picciuli', where the form of the verb used in Italian, 'esci', does not mean 'bring out', but 'go out'.

Subtitling has provided these directors with a means of opening up their films to spectators who are either partly or entirely unable to understand the dialects spoken, in such a way that spectators are asked to actively concentrate on the language spoken on the screen. This establishes an interaction that is new for Italian cinema, since, prior to these films, the assumption was that the spectator could not follow the source language. Ciprì and Maresco, as well as Piva, show a great linguistic awareness, evidenced by the personal interest they took in the subtitling

process. The films were conceived from the outset in dialect and shot with this in mind. Ciprì and Maresco worked without a detailed script with their non-professional actors, directing them to improvise and speak in the dialect of Palermo. Piva co-wrote the script with his brother Andrea, conceiving it as a sort of parallel text with the dialogues in dialect translated into Italian.[233]

3.3.2 Italian as the language of the Other

In Capuano's *Vito e Gli altri*, the Neapolitan dialect is the language spoken by the main characters: children and youths who are the victims and at the same time perpetrators of violence.[234] Italian on the other hand, is the language imposed by the establishment, as is clearly laid out at the beginning of the film when we hear a teacher reading from Dante's *Divine Comedy* and we see one of the boys walking nervously backwards and forwards, unable to bear the reading. This tension between dialect and Italian also pervades the films discussed here, where the respective use of dialect and Italian generates particular meanings and connotations, with subtitles playing an important role in this interaction.

As in *LaCapaGira*, in both Ciprì and Maresco's films dialect and Italian are used at the same time. Dialect, however, predominates and relegates Italian to the language of the Other, at the same time mocking and ridiculing it. Only a prostitute and a homosexual couple speak Italian in *Totò che visse due volte*. The affectionate expressions in Italian with which the prostitute Tremmotori,[235] a man dressed up as woman, addresses her clients are used to represent an escapist world. Her saccharine

[233] This way of presenting the screenplay was not received favourably by potential producers and led to Piva finally deciding to produce the film himself. Information regarding the subtitling of the films discussed here is derived from personal interviews that I conducted respectively with Ciprì and Maresco in January 2005 and with Piva in February 2006.
[234] The film tells the story of Vito, a member of a street gang who gets involved in petty crimes and is put away in a closed institution for troubled youths.
[235] Tremmotori is also discussed in relation to transvestism in chapter 2.2.3.

Italian is strongly in contrast with the crude dialect of the middle-aged community of males who are only interested in sex and food. Italian is also spoken, in the same film, between Pitrinu and Fefè, the homosexual couple, who express their love in a mannered Italian very reminiscent of 1950s Italian popular fiction. [236] Italian therefore comes to represent the feminine, the language of love, remaining strongly stereotyped and limited in its use. In the sequence in which the two men dig in a cemetery in the place where Pitrinu's father is buried in order to steal a gold ring from the corpse, and after Fefè in very crude dialect expresses his fears that Pitrinu's mother will reveal what they are doing, Pitrinu reassures Fefè saying in Italian: 'Non avere paura, amore mio. La mia mamma non parlerà e noi potremo sposarci e vivere felici per tutta la vita!' ('Have no fear, my beloved. My mama will say nothing of this and we will be able to get married and live happily ever after!').

In *Il ritorno di Cagliostro*, there is a much more extensive use of Italian as the film focuses on the petit bourgeois environment of would-be Sicilian film producers. The importance of dialect is however emphasised by the fact that in this film Ciprì and Maresco use an older and more impenetrable form of dialect for their characters, consistent with the setting of the film in the immediate post-war years. This older form of dialect, unaffected by influences from Italian and rich in idiomatic expressions, acts in counter position to the vacuous, farcical Italian that, for instance, characterises the dialogues of the films made by the Trinacria Film. What is interesting in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* is that dialect is the main element of the film that clearly represents Palermo, given that the film is shot mainly in interiors and we do not see much of Palermo itself. This reflects the two directors' aim to preserve aspects of Palermo destined to disappear as a consequence of globalisation and more specifically, as seen in chapter 1, a much-criticised restructuring plan that has

[236] See also chapter 2.2.2 and 2.2.3.

persuaded people who have always lived in the old town to move to the suburbs so that their houses can be sold to the middle classes.

As in *Totò che visse due volte*, in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* dialect strongly connotes the all-male world created by Ciprì and Maresco, making full use of its idiosyncrasies and idiomatic expressions. Much of the time it is very hard to follow and can only be comprehended thanks to the effective use of the subtitles. The effectiveness of the subtitles is not due to a detailed translation of the dialect but rather to the fact that they provide the spectator with just enough information to follow the plot.

Symbolically *LaCapagira* starts with a taxi driver involved in ferrying illegal Albanian immigrants who arrive on the shores of Puglia, watching a badly dubbed soap opera on a mini-screen in his car in which the characters use a typical television-standard Italian. The inexpressive stiltedness of this standard Italian is highlighted by its juxtaposition with the lively and vibrant dialect used by the characters in *LaCapaGira*. The predominance of dialect in *LaCapaGira* is affirmed from the opening credits when we hear the Mafia boss giving directions to one of his henchmen and, annoyed at not being understood, asks 'non capisci l'italiano?' ('don't you understand Italian?'), when he is, in fact, speaking dialect.

In *LaCapaGira*, too, subtitles do not provide an equivalent in Italian of idiomatic expressions in dialect, instead they are often translated very literally or not translated at all. In the film we hear the expression 'fare tum e tum', which is reported in the subtitles as it is said. We understand from the context that 'fare tum e tum' could mean 'being noisy' and/or 'not being able to keep silent', but even though the sentence could have easily been translated in various ways in Italian the dialect is kept and reported in the subtitles. 'Fare' means 'to make' and 'tum e tum' is purely

onomatopoeic and works very well without being translated, since its puerility complements the characters of *LaCapaGira*, who act like grown up children.

The main difference to *Totò che visse due volte* and *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* is that the dialect in *LaCapaGira*, although difficult to comprehend, has more influences from Italian and, in particular, youth slang. The film appeals to a young audience and can be seen as a sort of videogame, the object of which is to overcome a series of obstacles and deliver the package of drugs to its destination. This interpretation is underscored by the soundtrack, which seems inspired by videogame music, and the editing, which is structured around the various movements from one place to another by car and motorbike. In other words, Piva's cinematic text focuses on postmodernity, proposing a kind of cinema with which audiences are more familiar, a 'trip' in his Bari where the spectator is asked to enjoy the dialect with its piquant and colourful expressions.

Figure 33: Subtitles on *Il ritorno di Cagliostro*

3.3.3 Humour and swearing

As we have seen, humour is a fundamental element of Ciprì and Maresco's cinema in its recreation of a postmodern carnival that functions as a provocative and irreverent city-text imbued with social, philosophical and religious concerns. Piva's cinema, on

the other hand, follows the best tradition of the so-called *commedia all'italiana*, a comic genre that became popular in the 1960s.[237] It is a type of cinema that represents Italian society in a satirical manner, an approach that Piva takes up while managing successfully to restrain some of its excesses.

Comedy is a characteristic element of other films by directors from the South made in the 1990s/early 2000s. *Libera* (1993) and *I buchi neri* / *The Black Holes* (1995) by the Neapolitan Pappi Corsicato, as well as *Tano da morire* / *To Die for Tano* (1997) and *Sud Side Stori* (2000) by the Palermo-based Roberta Torre are all worthy of note. In *Libera*, a film comprised of three episodes, we see a woman who secretly films her husband's affairs with other women and finds out that her videos can become a lucrative business while *I buchi neri*, a film imbued with mythological references and surreal elements, is the story of a man in love with a prostitute. Torre's films make use of the musical, an unusual genre in Italian cinema, to ridicule a declining macho culture by showing women pretending to have a submissive role when in fact they are the ones in control.[238]

In these films dialect is used almost exclusively in its comic register. This register even characterises the dramatic reality represented in Capuano's *Vito e gli altri*. While the Italian of the social workers, teachers and prison officers highlights, in an austere and formal language, the harshness that these children are experiencing, the colourful and expressive dialect used by the children is used to subvert the moralism inherent in the use of Italian.

Humour represents a challenging task for subtitlers. Jorge Díaz-Cintas and Aline Remael (2007: 214-6) point out how translating humour requires insight and

[237] Dino Risi's *Il sorpasso* / *The Easy Life* (1962) is one of its finest examples. This film, which Piva quotes in his *Mio cognato*, is about a man who, while on holiday, by chance meets a shy young law student and takes him for a car ride that becomes a sort of journey of initiation.
[238] See also chapter 1.2.2 and 2.2.2.

creativity and obliges translators to activate solutions that, at times, in order to achieve the desired effect, are somewhat removed from the original. This is not the case in *Totò che visse due volte*, *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* and *LaCapaGira*, which do not interpret, or try to recreate an equivalent in Italian of what is said in the source language, but rather provide the audience with a key to the source language, so that it is not only dialect that retains its predominance but also the culture, and more specifically a certain kind of popular humour composed of salacious expressions and swear words.

In some ways, *Totò che visse due volte* does not pose many difficulties to the subtitler as its humour is essentially visual. Paletta, protagonist of the first episode, never speaks, and moves and acts as if in a silent film. That he likes sex is obvious from his facial expressions, which, as in silent cinema, clarify the action through exaggeration. Many scenes are a sort of *tableau vivant* and have little or no dialogue at all. An example is the beginning of the film, where the cinema audience, after watching a film where a man performs sex with a donkey (an extract from Ciprì and Maresco's *Lo zio di Brooklyn*), is seen in synchronised masturbation in the cinema toilets. As discussed in chapter 2, the carnivalesque in Ciprì and Maresco is rendered through the overflowing enormity of the bodies. Their carnival is not as joyful as the one commented on by Bakhtin, but is still reminiscent of a culture where bodily functions provoke laughter. It is a self-explanatory kind of humour, present in the tradition of many cultures. What often accompanies these *tableaux* is a refrain of swear words, most of which, although in dialect, are known everywhere in Italy, but there are also a number of picturesque expressions that are hard to comprehend and are not translated at all.

More difficulties are, however, faced by the subtitler in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* since dialogues are often fragmented and interrupted and are characterised

by nonsense, little-known expressions and speech impediments, reflecting a kind of humour that, as discussed in 3.1, has been defined, in Pirandellian terms, as a bitter reflection on life. Humour in *LaCapaGira*, on the other hand, is mainly verbal. This does not make the film wordy, as there are some humorous scenes with no dialogue at all, for instance the one in which Pasquale and Minuicchio listlessly search for the lost packet of drugs on the railway tracks while smoking a joint. However, humour is mostly based on dialogue, involving at times lengthy discussions of futile topics. An example is when a lorry driver tells the tenants of the video games hall the story of a very expensive tooth extraction he had in Milan; it turns out that the driver still keeps the tooth, which he shows them, and adds that he would be happy to give it to one of the tenants who is need of a replacement tooth.

While the subtitles in *LaCapaGira* provide an idea of what is said, at the same time preserving the flavour of the dialect, they do not, as in *Totò che visse due volte* and *Il ritorno di Cagliostro*, translate strong language or some salacious expressions. There are references to genitals and sexual practices that will reach only the audience familiar with the dialect. It can be argued that these expressions do not add to the general sense of the film; however, not translating them diminishes the role of some characters in terms of what Aline Remael, quoting Linell, defines as interpersonal dominance, which occurs when an interactant speaks the most in a particular dialogue sequence or exchange ('quantitative dominance'); when 'one party predominantly introduces and maintains topics and perspectives on a topic' ('semantic dominance'); and when there are 'patterns of asymmetry in the dialogue's initiative-response structure ('interactional dominance') (Remael 2003: 229-30). Both films with their economical use of subtitles seem to confirm the teleological aspect of subtitling with its capacity to 'streamline' and 'strengthen' the core message or theme of a film. However, a consequence of this process, as Remael argues, is that often voices of

dissent are cut (ibid: 225) or, I would add, deliberately left out in the process, as the fact that strong language is often completely ignored demonstrates. One explanation of this is that some of these expressions might be considered too strong to be rendered in Italian. The cantankerous Christ-like character in *Totò che visse due volte* in particular, who swears all the time, may be perceived as less vulgar since, when he loses his temper, very little of what he says is translated. It is important to remember however that *Totò che visse due volte* had problems with censorship, and the directors were firstly promised funds by the state that were then withdrawn after the completion of the film as it was judged to be blasphemous. Not subtitling the stronger language has perhaps given them more freedom at the expense of the average viewer unfamiliar with the dialect, and created, at the same time, a layer of intimacy in the film to which only the initiated are admitted.

We can conclude that what we now call dialects were once considered languages in their own right. The films discussed here have re-evaluated these languages and, as a consequence, overturned the old habit of Italian cinema of domesticating dialects. The directors have freed themselves from the need to rely on Italian to represent a culture that is inseparable from its language and is often in clear counter-position to the official culture.

It is difficult to assess whether subtitling has helped these films to reach a wider audience, considering the resistance in Italy to this translation practice. It has certainly helped those interested in a new and independent cinema, to realise that although difficult to comprehend and very different from one another, these dialects are part of a common cultural heritage. These differences bear witness to the rich and varied linguistic and cultural traditions of the Italian South, and the subtitling of these films demonstrates that they can also be understood by the rest of the country. What must be borne in mind is that the history of the Italian South, with all its dramatic

contradictions, is also part of the history of contemporary Western civilisation and that both the South and the North of the country find their roots in the same peasant culture. In Ciprì and Maresco this culture is resurrected in hybrid forms and at the same time mourned, while in Piva's Bari it is seen as contaminated by postmodernity.

The subtitling of these films, therefore, goes beyond what can merely be seen as a practical exercise. They have been conceived, above all, as a way of rendering the source language without losing its characteristics. This has meant reducing subtitles to a minimum and opting for a literal translation that helps the spectator to penetrate the dialect and its culture. This minimum, however, cannot be defined as the 'necessary' minimum, since, as always occurs with subtitling, in the process of not overloading the verbal in what is fundamentally a visual medium, inevitably something is lost.

The loss in these films regards mainly expressions, or entire sentences, in strong language, which have not been subtitled even though they are key to the process of establishing interpersonal dominance. It has been noted how this has softened the irascible Christ-like character in *Totò che visse due volte*, and the same can also be said of his alter ego, the cruel Mafioso with the same name played by the same actor. Sometimes, however, the assumption that the audience can in any case follow the narrative without the support of the subtitles holds true when, for example, Italian is used or the visuals and the soundtrack help. There is an entire un-subtitled joke in *LaCapaGira* about nervous tics recounted at a high pace by one the characters that would have been a useless *tour de force* for a translator.

Subtitling is a flawed practice, since it alters the film's signification through omission of words and expressions that are part of the subtleties and nuances of the source language. It is nevertheless preferable to the Italianisation of Italian dialects that has commonly characterised Italian cinema. In short, although imperfect,

subtitling is the best solution even though, as with all forms of translation, there is often some compromise or, as Eco would say, 'negotiation', that has to be made, referring to 'a process by virtue of which in order to get something, each party renounces something else' (Eco 2004: 6). The following are some of the negotiations that determined the adoption of subtitles in the films discussed here and influenced their use:

- Subtitling adopted as a negotiation between the use of unadulterated dialects, which are often hard to follow, and the reaching of a wider audience;
- An economical and literal use of Italian in the subtitles as a negotiation between helping the average viewer to follow the film and the need, at the same time, not to lose or domesticate linguistic and cultural characteristics.
- A partial or complete lack of subtitling into Italian of particularly salacious words and expressions in dialect, as a negotiation between using the dialect in all its richness and the concern about possible negative reactions from parts of the audience not at ease with dialect's salaciousness.

Although much has been written on the representation of the South in contemporary Italian cinema, subtitling has never been addressed as part of the discussion. The impression remains that despite the growing interest shown in subtitling by some independent directors, the practice itself is still very much undervalued in Italy and its full potential has yet to be explored. All the elements examined here seem to confirm the importance of subtitling not only as practical tool aimed at opening the film up to a wider audience, but also as a tool that highlights and preserves at the same time important issues in the use made of dialect.

Dialect becomes an element that confirms a certain identity, in contrast with a tradition of Italianisation of the dialect and a use of the dialect mainly in terms of

colour or geographical connotations. Ciprì and Maresco try to revive what remains of a certain dialect, that of the old generations. Significantly, in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* where a certain dissatisfaction with modern-day Palermo, a city of papier-mâché, says Maresco (Morreale 2003: 47), leads the two directors to work mainly in interiors, the only element that survives intact, which is most recognisable as Palermitan, is the dialect. The dialect becomes even older and more difficult to follow, almost at times the lost soundtrack of a city that has built its sense of belonging on the ruins caused by the Second World War bombings.

The two directors rejected the use of Italian to represent a culture that is inseparable from its language and is often in clear counter-position to the official culture. The same can be said of Piva's *LaCapagira* and of the other films mentioned here. The key difference however is that Piva, like other directors, is more at ease with what dialects have now become, still seeing them as vibrant and effective languages constantly changing thanks also to mass migration, while for Ciprì and Maresco they mainly connote the past, seen in terms of loss and nostalgia. The main achievement of these films, however, is that dialect is acknowledged as the spoken language of many people. The peasants of Olmi's *L'albero degli zoccoli* therefore have much in common with the sub-proletariat of Ciprì and Maresco's films as they manage, thanks to the use of their language, to give a truer representation of a country of such varied and different cultures.

Conclusion

Focusing on the main aspects that characterise their representation of Palermo, I have set out in this thesis to assess the aesthetic value and the impact of the ethical stance of Ciprì and Maresco's cinema. In the first part of this conclusion I will review the directors' poetics, showing how humour has been used in its various forms and modalities. In the second part I will focus on what most seems to characterise their vision of Palermo and evaluate the key findings that emerge from the main areas of research. In the final part, I consider how their cinema fits into the context of contemporary art cinema and assess their impact on Italian cinema, concluding with suggestions for further research.

Aesthetics and the Use of Humour

Spanning the period from the late 1980s to 2007, this thesis places Ciprì and Maresco's collaborative work in the context of the postmodern, defined both with reference to certain stylistic qualities as well as to a particular vision of time and history. The self-reflexive qualities of their cinema are undoubtedly postmodern as is the way it questions conventions and common assumptions. Adopting Jameson's definition of the postmodern in terms of *pastiche*, I have explored how the boundaries of Ciprì and Maresco's texts can be seen as 'permeable', combining a mixture of styles from the past (Jameson 1991: 18). The influence of and the references to Pasolini, in particular, as well as to other directors such as Fellini, Rosi, Bene and foreign influences such as Buñuel, Monty Python, Brazilian Cinema Novo and the cinema of Coppola and Scorsese has been evaluated. I have also focused on how

different styles have been used in their work up to *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* in which Palermo's past is evoked through different genres, which range from the *mock-documentary* to the *B-movie*, using a wide range of formats from video to cinemascope.

Investigating how Ciprì and Maresco propose a postmodern interpretation of Rabelais' carnival, creating a parody of carnival and its supposed regenerative power (which nonetheless retains its subversive nature through their use of provocative imagery), it has been highlighted that their version - unlike traditional carnival as discussed by Bakhtin (2009), where there is no separation between the character and the spectator - is strongly theatricalised through the use of characters who act as spectators within the diegesis itself.[239] This transformation of the filmic space into a theatrical space can be seen as a defining characteristic of their work.

There is also a postmodern quality to the way Ciprì and Maresco reinvent space, since their Palermo comprises only the sprawling outskirts and the narrow alleys of the old town and all the other parts of today's recognisable city are eliminated. What they show is a deserted and desolate city of ruins and rubble where men inhabit a landscape without landmarks or public spaces, which seems to echo an archaic and at the same time post-apocalyptic world. We saw how Palermo, with its old town and outskirts in *Lo zio di Brooklyn* and in *Totò che visse due volte*, becomes in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* a city of memory evoked through different genres. It is not clear what period is being represented and filmic time seems to coincide with real time. There are scenes when nothing seems to happen and characters stand motionless in front of the camera and other scenes where characters cross the screen, moving from one place to the other, in each case inhabiting what is conventionally defined as 'dead time'.

[239] See chapter 2.2.2 and 2.2.3.

Another defining aspect of the postmodern present in Ciprì and Maresco is their use of the film-within-a-film or the metafilmic. In this context I drew similarities between *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* and Orson Welles' *F for Fake* (1974), a self-reflexive documentary in which Welles appears as a magician reminding us that every story is both true and false, highlighting the limitations and the incantatory qualities of art. We are faced with a game of appearances where the two directors first make us believe in one version of the truth and then present a different version that is equally plausible.

Linked to the postmodern is the discussion on the neo-baroque,[240] which is characterised by a disregard for narrative cohesion, a preference for a multiple and fragmented structure, producing complexity by creating different layers of narrative and by the merging of different genres. It is a world with an illusory or theatrical nature in which dream and reality are indistinguishable, possessing a virtuosity revealed through stylistic flourish and allusion (Ndalianis 2004: 15). The neo-baroque was examined with reference to a certain type of art cinema exemplified by directors such as Fellini, Pasolini and Bene and revealed to be especially relevant as far as the discussion on the body is concerned.

This thesis has revealed that - contrary to what has often been identified as a key feature of the postmodern (Jameson 1991) and the neo-baroque (Calabrese 2013) and despite their evident awareness of different film styles and the intertextual nature of their films - Ciprì and Maresco's cinema does not sacrifice content to form. Most postmodern Italian directors have produced a kind of cinema with which spectators are more familiar, manifesting above all a certain fascination with postmodernity rather than questioning its effects. Ciprì and Maresco are, by contrast, critical of postmodernity and, in the first two films in particular, they create an uncomfortable

[240] See chapter 2.1.

experience for the spectator with a form of cinema that is far removed from contemporary viewers' tastes and expectations.

Within this discussion on the postmodern and the neo-baroque the element that most characterises Ciprì and Maresco's poetics is the use of humour. With the aim of pitilessly exposing issues affecting contemporary Palermo, humour functions as a provocative and irreverent tool imbued with social and philosophical concerns and is one of the main strategies Ciprì and Maresco use in pursuing their concept of cinema as a form of resistance. Their use of humour is most closely identified with 'kynical' humour as defined by Peter Sloterdijk (1988) with reference to the ancient Greek philosophy of the Kynics.[241] This thesis has revealed, however, how the references they make to ancient Kynicism, almost amounting to a parody of Diogenes – the strolling, the physical gestures and postures, the ways of dressing as well as the rejection of conventional manners, morals and basic decencies - are not what in themselves make Ciprì and Maresco Kynics. What is kynical, in Sloterdijk's terms, about their work, is their conviction that the role of art is to unmask established conventions and social mores through satirical laughter. With reference to Slavoj Zizek's reading of Sloterdijk (Zizek 1989: 28-30), we can see that 'the cynical subject is aware of the void between ideological mask and social reality, but nonetheless he continues to wear it. Kynicism by contrast represents the popular, plebeian rejection of official culture by means of irony and sarcasm.' What Ciprì and Maresco do instead is faithful to the kynical outlook, which contrasts the 'solemn, grave tonality' of the ruling official ideology with everyday banality and holds it up to ridicule, 'thus exposing behind the sublime noblesse of the ideological phrases the egotistical interests, the violence, the brutal claims to power' (ibid).

[241] See chapter 2.1.2.

In *L'Italia non esiste* ('Italy does not exist'), Fabrizio Rondolino (2011: 138) writes, quoting the Italian poet Giacomo Leopardi, that cynicism is 'a fundamental and distinctive characteristic of what it means to be Italian.' Rondolino discusses Italian cynicism from the unification of the country up until the present day, focusing on what may be regarded as the national characteristics of Italians, noting that

> 'It is cynical to be solely concerned with one's own affairs, to care nothing for the opinion of others, and always to favour compromise over principle; it is cynical to think only about day to day existence, avoiding challenges and hiding from the truth; it is cynical not to express one's own opinions in order to please one's superiors, without thought for others; it is cynical to genuflect but continue sinning; to censure the sins of others while forgiving one's own; to invoke the law while always trying to deceive and cheat'. (ibid)

Reading this list calls to mind the world represented in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* where each of these elements is reflected in the story of the film.

This thesis went on to investigate the impact of Luigi Pirandello on Ciprì and Maresco's cinema. Attributing the same role to art as the Kynics, Pirandello conceives humour as the art of the 'opposite' that through reflection disrupts the image created by an initial impression and triggers new feelings leading to 'bitter laughter' (Pirandello 1993: 78).[242] 'Through this discovery, the humourist sees the painful and serious side, he deconstructs this construct but not solely to laugh, and instead of mocking, perhaps through laughter he will understand and sympathise' (ibid: 90). It is the role played by reflection that renders the perception of contrast, of the 'sense of the opposite', possible and in Ciprì and Maresco reflection on grotesque and ridiculous characters triggers profound new feelings.

The type of humour that most characterises Ciprì and Maresco's cinema, however, is the carnivalesque, which was analysed with reference to Shohat and Stam's application of Bakhtin's writings to film studies (Shohat and Stam 2014). The

[242] See chapter 3.1.

focus was on how Palermo is represented as a rural world surviving among the ruins of the urban world where men, some dressed as women, are participants in a sombre carnival, food is joylessly gorged on and the weakest are the object of cruel mockery. With reference to the different categories of the carnivalesque identified by Shohat and Stam (2014: 305) outlined in the Introduction,[243] a summary of the elements in Ciprì and Maresco's films that relate to each of these categories is set out below.

The use of humour to 'anarchise' institutional hierarchies or direct corrosive laughter at patriarchal authority

The concept of state is completely absent in Ciprì and Maresco's *Lo zio di Brooklyn* and *Totò che visse due volte*. There are no policemen, civil servants or any other representatives of the law. Apart from the Mafia, the only 'institution' present is the Church. In *Il ritorno di Cagliostro*, and clearly associated with the Mafia, the Church is the object of caustic parody with priests portrayed as stammering halfwits. Ciprì and Maresco are the only directors in Italian cinema to have represented the Mafia as closely connected with the Church and they also fearlessly explore aspects related to the Mafia that have helped to shape Sicilian cultural identity. [244]

Patriarchal authority is another target of their humour, expressed within the family by continuous arguments and exaggerated displays of aggressive masculinity and best exemplified in the sequence in the second episode of *Totò che visse due volte* where Bastiano, Pitrinu's brother, publicly derides and physically attacks his brother because of his homosexuality. Removing his belt to beat Pitrinu and his lover, this

[243] See the first part of the Introduction.
[244] See chapter 3.2.

farcical and highly dramatized act mirrors the traditional father-delivered punishment as an affirmation of Bastiano's authority and masculinity.[245]

The comic focus, whether visual or verbal, on the lower bodily stratum

Visual and verbal references of this type abound in Ciprì and Maresco's cinema, which presents a gallery of obese people naked from the waist up who often punctuate their dialogues with belches and farts. Excrement and urine are thrown on Paletta in the first episode of *Totò che visse due volte* and masturbation is also a constant in the same episode. The impact of this characteristic was discussed with reference to Giuseppe Paviglianiti's copious eating in *Lo zio di Brooklyn* and in particular in the video *Il pranzo*, where he seems to be attempting to force his own body beyond its physical limits through a mechanical and obsessive swallowing, resulting in various bodily emissions (belching, farting and vomiting).[246] It was also commented on with reference to the sequence in *Totò che visse due volte* that mocks Jesus Christ's Last Supper where, within the context of the topos of the 'comic banquet' identified by Bakhtin in the carnivalesque, the Christ-like figure Totò enters the scene scratching his genitals, annoyed that the disciples have not waited for him and objecting that they are 'sucking his blood'.

The aggressive overturning of a classical aesthetic based on formal harmony and good taste

This refers to Ciprì and Maresco's interest in the grotesque, in the male body with all its grossness and carnivalesque protuberances, which in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* is replaced by tics and stammering, strongly recalling Pirandello's characters. The way

[245] See chapter 2.2.2.
[246] See chapter 2.3.2.

that, according to Shohat and Stam (2014: 303), Bakhtin's definition of carnival embraces 'an anti-classical aesthetic that rejects formal harmony and unity in favour of the asymmetrical, the heterogeneous' was also discussed. This is an aesthetic that refuses to accept the 'fascism of beauty' with its static, classic, anodyne forms, and offers up instead the changeable, transgressive, 'grotesque body', constructing its own particular language of beauty. Ciprì and Maresco too have invented a language of beauty applicable to the world they have created, which derives from the characters' inner sense of satisfaction with their own corporeal reality but which is far removed from commonly accepted canons of beauty.

The celebration of social inversions and parodying of high art or genres

A clear example of social inversion can be found in the sequence of the Last Supper in *Totò che visse due volte*,[247] in which, as in Buñuel's *Viridiana*, vagrants are cast in the roles of Jesus's disciples. Examples of social inversion abound in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* where they make use of their own idiosyncratic troupe of actors, some of whom were in real life living on the streets, to play the roles of important personages and aristocrats in an improbable costume drama. Significantly, the role of the Cardinal is assigned to Pietro Giordano, who spent many years of his life as a beggar in the environs of Palermo's churches, while the roles of doctors in a mental institution are played by real-life patients.

Summary of Findings

This thesis has examined how Ciprì and Maresco expose many of the urban and social problems of contemporary Palermo, addressing issues such as illegal building; the sprawling city; the destruction of the old city; the daily realities of people living on

[247] See chapter 2.3.3.

the margins of society; the effects of a certain macho culture in interpersonal relations and in family nuclei and aspects of identity attributed to being Sicilian, related also to the Mafia phenomenon and its connections with the Church. The key findings from the three chapters of this thesis are set out below.

Cityscapes

Placing the discussion within the context of ecocriticism, this chapter focused on how Ciprì and Maresco conceive the role of the filmmaker as someone who 'holds a responsibility to represent the world in which he or she lives' (Seger 2015: 16). Applying Bakhtin's notion of 'chronotope' (Bakhtin 2006), in section 1.1 the way they represent the environment and the kinds of lifestyles they portray was analysed through investigating the function of the 'road'. The analysis revealed that in Ciprì and Maresco's world all roads are the same, constantly intersecting and following a circular trajectory with the main characters departing or leaving from the same place. What characterises this world, in contrast with Bakhtin's definition of the road as a metaphorical journey of initiation into adulthood, is that not much seems to change in the lives of the characters, notwithstanding the various misadventures they encounter.

Section 1.2 focused on the two different ways that Ciprì and Maresco portray the landscape. The way they film the rubble that still remains from the Second World War bombings reveals a curatorial intent aimed at the preservation of memory and as a reaction to the transformation of a city that, through a programme of rebuilding and urban development, is in the process of erasing its own past. Usually this rubble is represented in a series of *tableaux* that form the backdrop to scenes in which the pictorial treatment of the characters lends them an air of historical ruins. Alternatively they film the landscape as a form of denunciation, focusing on images of enormous run-down blocks of flats viewed from a distance and shown in a series of fixed shots.

These ruins from building speculation, displayed one after the other in documentary-reportage style, are used to express condemnation and serve to highlight an inexorable destruction of the landscape.

This world of suburbs, succession of anonymous buildings and lack of recognisable landmarks is a recurrent feature in contemporary Italian cinema. What is original about Ciprì and Maresco is the almost complete absence of public places, which contributes to the depiction of a remote and lawless city emptied of all signs of modernity. Another important element is the indistinctiveness resulting from the blurred boundaries between the city and the countryside or what is more commonly defined as the sprawling city (section 1.3). Ciprì and Maresco recreate in this indistinctive space a particular kind of rural world that takes into account the radical changes faced by peasant culture in post-war Italy and the hybrid forms that this culture has developed in metropolitan environments. What might seem like a surreal juxtaposition of rural and urban elements in fact shows how aspects of rural ways of life have survived in a city environment. Vincenzo Masini's study (1984), which discusses these aspects in relation to some areas of the old town in Palermo, highlights how a protective world similar to that in rural communities is created within these urban spaces and the physical proximity of others serves to strengthen family and extended family relationships, including the absorption into these family units of friends and neighbours.

Bodies

Chapter 2, 'Bodies', investigated what most characterises bodies in Ciprì and Maresco's films and the way they occupy space. Section 2.1 evaluated how the carnivalesque, the neo-baroque and Kynicism assume a particular relevance in the discussion on the body. Bodies - which are often obese, deformed or disfigured and

are presented immobile, forming part of the cityscape - come to be seen as 'human' ruins. The way they move within and inhabit space leads us to connect Ciprì and Maresco's work with Kynicism. It was noted, however, that ancient Kynics divided society into those who, as a conscious choice, followed the rules and those who did not, while in Ciprì and Maresco the element of choice is absent since everyone transgresses the rules not as an act of free will but merely out of the urges dictated by human needs and instincts. Some of their actors used to live on the streets and the fact that Ciprì and Maresco specifically chose those individuals to portray the conditions of life on the margins of society is a defining aspect of their poetics. Making reference to the work of Michel de Certeau (1988), it was observed that, unlike Kynicism, which conceived the occupation of public spaces as a form of rebellion against a dominant power, in Ciprì and Maresco what we see is how individuals on the margins of society come to appropriate outdoor spaces as a form of protection against a ruling power rather than as an explicit protest.

Section 2.2 looked at how we can identify characteristics of the typical Italian family in Ciprì and Maresco's world with its rigidly divided interpersonal relationships. The first part focused on how even though family units have become increasingly restricted compared with the past, with two or, more recently, only one child, there is still strong evidence of inter-generational solidarity, producing 'particular qualities of spatial and emotional proximity' (Ginsborg 2001: 74), though Ciprì and Maresco mainly focus on the negative influences of this proximity.

The second part of the section dealt with the uneasiness of these relationships, which leads to sons constantly seeking to affirm their primacy as a reaction to their domineering or suffocating mothers whose behaviour threatens their self-image as strong independent men. It was noted that this desire for primacy is above all expressed in the obsessive search for a 'woman' and through a need to exhibit sexual

prowess. I defined this type of masculinity using Sciascia's analogy of the cockerel, an animal commonly perceived as having the most perfect sexuality, 'easily aroused, insatiable and capable of amply satisfying all the sexual demands made of it' (Sciascia, 1997: 42), even though this inevitably leads to 'an unfulfilled sexuality that must be displaced as a result to the level of fantasy' (ibid: 42). This model has been revealed as unstable and fragile, based on an outmoded 'gender construction', typified by 'the tendentious preservation of female chastity, the archaic code of honour, and talking about sex rather than sexual action' (ibid).

Drawing on Kaja Silverman's *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (1992a), the third part of the section focused on how Ciprì and Maresco's representation of masculinity includes significant elements of identification with the feminine, expressed through the characters' desperate longing for a woman and visually represented through the use of transvestism. Silverman's argument that the 'gaze' can be adopted by both a male and a female spectator and that the controlling subject is not always male, nor is the passive object always female, acted as the context for the analysis of key sequences in *Totò che visse due volte*. Notwithstanding that in Ciprì and Maresco the cockerel model of sexual relations apparently seems to predominate as 'identification that consolidates the ego', this is belied by the elements of identification with the feminine, giving way to a continuous vacillation of sexual and gender orientation.

The final section of the chapter, where hunger in its different forms and its connection with death was discussed, dealt with the cinematic influences on Ciprì and Maresco related to this theme, focusing in particular on Pasolini (section 2.3.1), the Brazilian Cinema Novo, and the irreverent Rabelaisian humour of Monty Python's cinema (section 2.3.2). The theme of hunger and death was then explored with reference to the sacred (section 2.3.3), including an analysis of how the representation

of the body in Pasolini's early films is still modelled on the myth of the innocence of peasant culture, whereas the anthropological mutation of the Italian people predicted by Pasolini in the early 1970s appears in Ciprì and Maresco to be already accomplished. The chapter concluded with an evaluation of Ciprì and Maresco's cinema of in the light of Franco Cassano's *Il Pensiero meridiano* (1996), 'Southern Thought', including a comparison between the vision of life emerging from Ciprì and Maresco's cinema and that invoked by Cassano for a new South, which calls for a re-evaluation of typical features of Mediterranean culture such us 'slowness' and 'sensuality'. The 'slow rhythms' combined with a constant awareness of death that we see in the world created by Ciprì and Maresco are what, according to Cassano, most characterises the South. The 'sensuality' that Cassano also defines as fundamentally Southern is rendered almost funereal by the two directors, reduced to the empty rite of masturbation and the obsessive gorging of food.

Identities

Chapter 3 focused on issues related to identity, addressed by Ciprì and Maresco at a time when Italy was experiencing continuous challenges to its national identity, revealing a fractured and unstable nature. In section 3.1, 'Sicilianity', I argued that Ciprì and Maresco claim a particular kind of Sicilian identity linked to Pirandello and sought to establish how much of Pirandello's influence there is in *Il ritorno di Cagliostro*, referring to Sciascia's definition of *sicilianità*, which draws on Pirandello. Sicilianity for Sciascia means 'an extreme form of individualism in which the components of virile exaltation and sophisticated disintegration act in duplicate and inverse motion in relation to one another' (Sciascia 2001: 21). According to Ciprì and Maresco, *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* was born out of a profound sense of tragedy, in which Sicilianity means to be led by an obsession, something that is pursued without

regard to the consequences, as in the case of certain Pirandellian characters. Obsession, therefore, while remaining a component specific to Pirandello, is seen as a typically Sicilian trait.

The thesis went on to consider issues regarding the cinematic adaptation of literary works given that *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* is evidently influenced by Pirandello's short story *La cattura / The Capture* (1928) and is also the inspiration for *Due sequestri / Two Kidnappings*, an episode of the Taviani Brothers' *Tu ridi / You Laugh* (1998). While in the Tavianis' episode many elements of Pirandello's short story are retained, their predilection for political comment conflicts with Pirandello's poetics. Similarly, notwithstanding that Ciprì and Maresco's declared intentions are aligned with those expressed by Pirandello, this does not mean that they reflect the so-called Sicilianity of Pirandello. Ciprì and Maresco's characters do not suffer from the inner turmoil that is typical of Pirandello and this can be explained in both instances by the historical context in which they are placed. Pirandello's work is set in the context of post-unification Italy and the uncertainties of his characters reflect those of a country that is struggling to find its identity, while *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* is set during the post-war period of the Economic Miracle, when the influence of the American Dream led many to cut their links with a peasant past.

Section 3.2, 'Mafia and Religion', focused on how Ciprì and Maresco represent the relationship between Mafia and religion, looking at how the Mafia and the Church are deeply intertwined and together have shaped Sicilian cultural identity. Deconstructing the myth of the 'good Mafia', Ciprì and Maresco show godlike Mafiosi figures with messianic tendencies that present their violent and dishonest acts as being for the greater good. Traditional representations of the Mafia, as shown in films like Franceso Rosi's *Salvatore Giuliano* (1961), become the object of parody in Ciprì and Maresco where, in deliberate contrast to the dramatic weeping of Giuliano's

mother in Rosi's film, the mourning mothers sound fake and unconvincing and death has lost its sacredness, subverting through these techniques a whole tradition of representing the Mafia.

Section 3.3, 'Dialect versus Italian', focused on linguistic identity through an analysis of the use of dialect and how it is subtitled into Italian in Ciprì and Maresco's *Totò che visse due volte* and *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* and comparing them to Alessandro Piva's *LaCapaGira / My Head is Spinning* as well as to other films by contemporary directors from the South. It was argued that dialect, used to denote a Southern cultural identity, is the main language of the film and Italian is relegated to the language of the Other, counterposing the two linguistic and cultural identities as a means of rejecting the dominance of the official culture. In Ciprì and Maresco's films, subtitles combine with the images and the soundtrack to create different layers of signification. Italian becomes the object of ridicule, confirming the cultural predominance of the source language, dialect. This can also be seen in the way Italian is used in the subtitles, as a key to understanding the dialect rather than as a tool to transpose it. This awareness of a clear and distinctive identity is not a celebration of particular Sicilian cultural and human traits; on the contrary it embraces a profound critique of certain attitudes and approaches to life considered to be quintessentially Sicilian.

Ciprì and Maresco's Legacy and Further Research

In Ciprì and Maresco's short film *Grazie Lia / Thanks Lia* (1994) the voice off says: 'But here's the funny part, we're all pretending to see when we know the light has gone forever'. The pretence of seeing, notwithstanding the disappearance of the light, is a metaphor for the death of cinema, also expressed in the powerful image, this time

from *A memoria*,[248] of Saint Poliphemus taking out his glass eye, significantly an image that appears on the first page of Paolo Cherchi Usai's book *The Death of Cinema* (2001). While in Rabelais religious relics - the dismembered bodies of saints - are used as objects of parody (Bakhtin 2009: 350), in Ciprì and Maresco this is the only relic we see, the glass eye of a living saint, which becomes a metaphor for a world that has already come to an end. With such a vision of life and such a provocative and uncompromising way of representing it, Ciprì and Maresco can undoubtedly be compared to great counter-current Italian filmmakers such as Pasolini and Bene and, in a wider context, to Buñuel, French New Wave directors of the 1960s, the Brazilian Cinema Novo filmmakers and Monty Python. Among directors working today, we can find striking similarities in the work of the Portuguese director Pedro Costa and the Swedish director Roy Andersson.

Costa's work is characterised by the use of different genres; fiction and documentary are layered together in a mixture of references to high and to popular culture. As in Ciprì and Maresco, Costa's films are mainly set in the poorer, more run down quarters of the city with their dark alleys and derelict buildings, in this case of Lisbon, and feature a narrative slowness rendered through extreme long takes. Rubble and ruins form the backdrop to stories in which non-professional actors are used, without any hint of condescension, to act out events from their own lives. Andersson's films are instead characterised by a caustic humour that very much recalls Ciprì and Maresco, as does the narrative slowness and the way he films his characters as fixed and immobile, hardly speaking. Scenes are composed in a pictorial manner, with the lighting and costumes designed to recreate the paintings of Andersson's favourite artists Lucian Freud and Otto Dix, with whom he shares a vision of life as fragile and who, like him, focused on individuals who have been

[248] See chapter 1.2.2.

scarred by their life experiences. It is a world that has reached its end, where the value of cinema and art itself is brought into question, exemplified in his film, *En duva satt på en gren och funderade på tillvaron* / *A Pigeon Sat on a Branch Reflecting on Existence* (2014), in which two unsuccessful salesmen of cheap novelty items can be seen as a metaphor for cinema, or art in general, that no longer has anything original to say.

Finally, I would like to consider the overall impact of Ciprì and Maresco's collaborative output on Italian cinema and how their later individual work can be assessed in the light of it. What we can conclude is that the whole creative surge emanating from the South of Italy towards the end of the 1980s, in which the city was the key point of reference, has substantially subsided. Even the foremost exponents from that time, such as Mario Martone, have shifted their focus away from their early preoccupations. In recent years Martone has turned his attention to XIX century Italian history and has become more mainstream. Some directors that started out in those years, including Paolo Sorrentino,[249] have strengthened their *œuvre* but have, at the same time, lost the sense of cohesion deriving from their strong identification with the South that existed in the 1990s. We can define Sorrentino's film *La grande bellezza / The Great Beauty* (2013) as one of the most representative examples of neo-baroque cinema. Awarded an Oscar as best Foreign Language film in 2014, the film presents a portrait of Rome through the eyes of a successful but disenchanted journalist, featuring interiors of grand old buildings and noble villas. It is a world in which politicians, Mafia bosses, journalists, actors, decadent aristocrats, high-ranking clergy and artists and intellectuals all rub shoulders. While humour is directed in Sorrentino at laying bare the existential crises of our times, in the end it seems to acquiesce in elements of our social mores rather than condemning them.

[249] See chapter 3.2.2 about the representation of the Mafia in Sorrentino.

Even the best films of recent years seem to favour form over content, as Vito Zagarrio (2012) confirms making reference to Emanuele Crialese's *Terraferma* (2011), a film set in the island of Lampedusa about a family of fishermen who help some refugees. Zagarrio observes that what is missing from contemporary Italian cinema is, above all, the moral outrage of directors of the past. We can also add, taking up a statement made by Maresco, that we seem to have reached the end of an era in which the filmmaker was to be feared (Borvitz 2014: 329).

Given the profound impact Ciprì and Maresco have undoubtedly had on the representation of Palermo, freeing it from the over-exploited image of a Mafia-ridden hell, it behoves us to assess how much influence Ciprì and Maresco's joint *œuvre* has had on filmmakers who have featured Palermo in their work in more recent years. There have in fact been very few films made featuring Palermo compared with the period from the 1970s to the 1990s, comprising only a handful. Among these is Wim Wenders' *Palermo Shooting* (2007),[250] where the director's poetics of death and decadence leads to a representation of Palermo as mysterious and inscrutable. Stefano Incerti's *L'uomo di vetro* / *The Man of Glass* (2007) is also set in Palermo and tells the story of a man who, unjustly incarcerated for suspected Mafia activity, suffers a nervous breakdown, but when he decides to collaborate with the authorities they do not believe him because of his psychological condition. Other films include the debut work of Pierfrancesco Diliberto AKA Pif, *La mafia uccide solo d'estate / The Mafia Kills Only in Summer* (2013), a film that thoroughly dismantles the glorified image of the Mafia, highlighting the attitude of those many people who preferred not to acknowledge or diminished the severity of the violence in that period; and *Via Castellana Bandiera / A Street in Palermo* (2013), the debut film of theatre director and playwright Emma Dante, which has a strong theatrical structure and whose

[250] See the first part of the Introduction.

female characters confirm the image of a culture that is held together by a strong matriarchy. *Via Castellana Bandiera* is constructed around a duel between two women who face off in their cars in an alleyway. The film makes interesting use of the street, which in the early scenes is extremely narrow and gradually widens for a symbolic finale, signifying that obstacles can be overcome if we widen our perspective.

Leaving aside the question of whether Ciprì and Maresco's *œuvre* played any part in the conception of *Palermo Shooting*, Wenders' portrayal of Palermo is typical of his poetics, enriched with baroque elements inspired by the city's spirit and architecture. Wenders' transformation of the city into an existential, almost metaphysical map can also be seen in his earlier work featuring Berlin, *Der Himmel über Berlin* / *Wings of Desire* (1987), and Lisbon, *Viagem a Lisboa* / *Lisbon Story* (1994). Incerti's treatment of the city relies more on realism and features faithful reconstructions of the time that the film is set. The same realism also characterises Pif's film, which uses a television reportage style of filming to represent Palermo. Dante's film, on the other hand, recreates with great stylistic panache a portrait of sub-proletarian Palermo, held in the sway of violence and abuse and of all the films mentioned here is the closest in spirit to Ciprì and Maresco.

As far as the individual output of Ciprì and Maresco after their separation is concerned, we can see in Ciprì's initial work a continuation of the poetics that he and Maresco evolved over their years working together. In the first feature film he made on his own, *E' stato il figlio*, he recreates Palermo in Puglia, where the entire film was shot.[251] His latest film, however, *La buca*,[252] forms a break with the past and can be seen above all as an example of a postmodern work in which form prevails over

[251] See the second part of the Introduction and chapter 2.3.1.
[252] See the first part of the Introduction.

content. The film is set in an imaginary city somewhat reminiscent of Palermo but it mostly relies on metafilmic elements, narrative invention and stylistic virtuosity rather than focusing on substantive issues or aiming to expose social realities.

Maresco's subsequent work is worthy of a separate study. He has remained close to the aims that characterised his work with Ciprì, though he has dedicated most of his efforts to the documentary format; first with his *exposé* of Berlusconi's relationship with Sicily, *Belluscone. Una storia siciliana*,[253] and most recently with a documentary on the *œuvre* of the dramaturge Franco Scaldati, *Gli uomini di questa città io non li conosco – Vita e teatro di Franco Scaldati* / *I Do Not Know the Men of This City – The Life and Theatre of Franco Scaldati*.[254] Aside from paying homage to his friend who died in 2013, the documentary, as can already be inferred from its title, has a polemic intent. While we have already observed that *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* can be seen as a melancholic farewell to a city that Ciprì and Maresco no longer recognised, in his documentary Maresco talks of Palermo as a 'terrifying' city that has lost all traces of the humanity evident in Scaldati's plays (Fusco 2015) and concludes that, far from being a city with a warm Mediterranean character, Palermo's indifference and callousness are now overwhelming (ibid).

Ciprì and Maresco's work has continued to attract research interest years after the end of their collaboration. Among the most recent studies, I have referred to the detailed monograph by Sieglinde Borvitz *Controcorrente: Die kruden Visionen von Ciprì und Maresco* (2014),[255] which focuses on their use of the grotesque as a critique of Italian society and also to Monica Seger's essay included in her *Landscapes in Between. Environmental Change in Modern Italian Literature and Film* (2015),

[253] See the first part of the Introduction.
[254] See the first part of the Introduction.
[255] See the fourth part of the Introduction.

which places their work within the context of ecocriticism, focusing on the way humans inhabit space and merge with the landscape.

As far as this study is concerned, I have covered the various aspects of the two directors' poetics, using a systematic approach to encompass perspectives from a range of disciplines and providing evidence of how Ciprì and Maresco's city-text constitutes an 'abstract' vehicle to reflect on changes in the environment and in people's lives in modern-day Italy. In view of the many aspects dealt with and the interdisciplinary nature of the work, further specific studies to develop discrete areas of this thesis are worth considering. Among these I would suggest the following:

- An investigation of the 'Rogue-Clown-Fool' elements of Ciprì and Maresco's work, applying Bakhtin's concept of chronotope as it was applied here to the discussion of the road and linking this to the carnivalesque. The Rogue-Clown-Fool is a core character type for Ciprì and Maresco, whose function, through parodying others and acting out life as a comedy, is to reveal the conventionality that pervades human life (Bakhtin 2006).
- A comparison between Ciprì and Maresco's Palermo and Scaldati's Palermo, in view also of the insight into Scaldati's work provided by Maresco's documentary. As Goffredo Fofi writes, Scaldati was 'the first to take Beckett into the gutter, into the refuse heaps of Palermo-Gomorrah (Uzzo 2011: 47).
- An examination of the representation of food consumption and fatness from a neo-baroque perspective, extending my research on Ciprì and Maresco to other directors such as Luis Buñuel, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Carmelo Bene, Marco Ferreri, Monty Python, Peter Greenaway and Roy Andersson.
- A development of the discussion on the representation of the Mafia in the Italian American cinema of directors like Coppola and Scorsese, compared

with Ciprì and Maresco and other Italian directors to investigate how Mafia culture has influenced the creation of a specific kind of cultural identity, both in the United States and in Sicily.

It is hoped that this thesis will constitute a valid contribution to the knowledge and understanding of Ciprì and Maresco's cinema and the issues they explore through their representation of Palermo and, as such, will serve to promulgate a much greater awareness of the importance of their unique and extraordinary work.

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