Sound

Strangely, there has been little comment on the soundtrack of the film. It makes great use of sound off. This is a device rarely used for narrative purposes by documentaries, which instead make great use of sound *over* – something *Roma città aperta* never uses; indeed, anything that might establish a point of view *outside* that of the characters in the narrative itself is rigorously eschewed, and this too distinguishes the film sharply from documentary (and also from *Paisà*, incidentally). (Sound coming from a source that exists in the world of the film's story, but is not in the frame, is considered sound coming from off-camera, abbreviated to 'sound off.' Sound that has no source in the world of the film's story, but that has been added at the editing stage – for example, background music or the commentary of a documentary film – is called 'sound over.') The loud booming sound off of the *Radio Londra* broadcast at the beginning, as the camera surveys the exterior of Manfredi's apartment, is a sound over *effect*, but it is clearly intended to be 'subjective' to the inhabitants of the apartment (to tune into the station was illegal), and is an economical way of indicating the political sympathies of Manfredi's landlady and her maid.

The images and the synchronized sound were not recorded simultaneously. Thus, from an objective point of view, the synchronized sound and the background music both have the same status, in the sense that they were both synthesized and added to the film in a similar manner at the editing stage. The normal way in which post-synchronized dialogue and sound effects are achieved is as follows: as the camera films the action, a microphone records simultaneously the sounds made by the actors and the environment as they speak and move around. This soundtrack, called a 'guide track,' is not used in the finished film, but instead serves as a guide at the dubbing stage, to enable the actors to reproduce their dialogue in accurate synchrony with their original performances (so that the words you hear fit exactly the movements of their mouths, for example), and to enable the sound technicians to synchronize the sound effects (such as doors closing, footsteps, etc.). *Roma città aperta* is unusual for the fact that it was shot without a guide track, the reason being that it cost a great deal more to develop film with a soundtrack on it than film without one, especially the variable-density type of optical track that *Roma città aperta* uses. (Interestingly, *Ladri di biciclette* was another film shot in this unorthodox way.) The camera Rossellini used, a DeVry model made in Illinois, USA, was particularly

favoured by newsreel photographers for the ease of changing its magazine, and for the clarity of its lenses. A photograph of Rossellini standing beside the camera on the set of *Roma città aperta* is reproduced in Tag Gallagher's biography of Rossellini (and looks as though it was taken during the shooting of the SS round-up at Via Montecuccoli). The fact that there is no sound-deadening cover ('blimp') over the camera is further evidence that the film was shot entirely without sound – if no sound was being recorded, there would be no need to suppress the camera's noise. The result in the finished film is that the synchronization of the dialogue with the movements of the actors' lips is often poor (incidentally, it is at its best when Bergmann and Hartmann are talking in German). Generally, this does not matter, because there are not many close-ups in the film (see 'Mise en scène' below). When a dialogue has been filmed in close-up, sometimes greater care has been taken with the synchronization at the dubbing stage (as, for example, in the conversation between Francesco and Pina on the staircase outside Pina's flat on the night before her wedding). Jolanda Benvenuti had the job of rehearsing Marcello's dialogue with Don Pietro following the blow with the frying pan to the grandfather. He was required to say, 'All'anima, Don Pie', che padellata che j'ha dato.' Vito Annichiarico could not get it right, and got more and more irritated, until he eventually refused to rehearse any more. In the finished film, this is dealt with by shooting him holding the frying pan and beginning his line (his lips do not match the sounds), then quickly cutting to a shot of Don Pietro taken from behind Francesco, so that we no longer see the boy's face. Some of the actors dubbed their own performances (those playing the roles of Pina, Don Pietro, Marcello, Lauretta, and Agostino, for example), while for other roles a different actor did the dubbing (the roles of Manfredi, Francesco, Bergmann, and Ingrid, for example).

Jolanda Benvenuti also recounts that she was given the job of producing the sound effect of the machine-gun fire that kills Pina. She did this by producing a bang, and then repeating that section of soundtrack several times at regular intervals, and finally doing the same thing with a slightly softer echo effect. She also maintains that quite a number of things in the film (she does not specify which) were achieved by making use of 'special effects.' She does explain how it was possible for Bergmann to strike Manfredi in the face so violently with a whip, and how it was possible to make it look as though the flesh on his chest was burning from the blowtorch that the torturers were using on him. Immediately in front of Marcello Pagliero (Manfredi) was a sheet of

glass, which Harry Feist (Bergmann) struck with his whip, and onto which pieces of hair had been stuck, which caught fire when the flame from the blowtorch hit them – to the viewer it appears that Manfredi's skin is burning. (These shots have been cut from some anglophone prints of the film.)

Many of the legends surrounding *Roma città aperta* have Rossellini as their source. Tag Gallagher quotes from a 1971 interview in which Rossellini talks about the scene of Don Pietro's execution:

> The whole scene was tremendously flat, something was missing. I saw the shots only three months [after we filmed them]. And there was very little material, because ... I had a repulsion against doing [extra] angles. I wanted to take risks, I like that. [But now] I was worrying about what to do.' The solution, he said in 1971, was 'really for me the most illuminating experience in my life. Just at the last moment I thought of giving the scene a certain kind of rhythm. It was very simple, we set up a microphone and with a finger I beat a chair, thump, thump, thump, and that little, nearly imperceptible noise completely changed the rhythm of the scene. So through that I learned that the main thing is to find the right rhythm: the [right] movement of the camera and people.[8]

It sounds as though a faint drumbeat is playing on the soundtrack: a beat, a pause, and then two beats close together. I must confess to a sneaking suspicion that Rossellini may have seen an execution scene in a film accompanied by a drumbeat – indeed, I can scarcely believe that he had not. Whether or not the drumbeat changes the rhythm of the scene, it certainly rehearses a cinematic convention. What is, of course, characteristic of Rossellini is that he exploits a conventional cinematic device *without* having a proper drumbeat on the soundtrack – just a hint: he uses a cliché and later builds a legend around it.

One of the most powerful rhetorical devices used by the film involves the soundtrack: the contrast of rhetorical register between the dubbing, by Giulio Panicali, of Harry Feist's performance as Bergmann and the humbler speech of Don Pietro and Manfredi. It is a matter to which we shall return later.

Mise en scène

In this area the film shares some features characteristic of documentary filming. However, whereas documentaries generally make great use of

panning movements of the camera, the only 'scene-setting' pan in the film (such as is frequently encountered in documentaries, in the films of Visconti and De Santis and, to a lesser extent, those of Germi) is that over the rooftops of Rome behind the title credits (this shot does not appear in most anglophone copies of the film). One might have expected a pan for effect along the rows of the lined-up inhabitants of Via Montecuccoli during the German round-up, but Rossellini does not include one (this might not be a question of style, but simply of not having enough extras to convincingly furnish such a pan).

As a *general* point about the *mise en scène* of the film, it is worth noting at the outset that a Hollywood feature like *To Have and Have Not*, for example, appears to share many of the same stylistic characteristics as *Roma città aperta*, as do a large number of films of the 'realist' style of the 1940s.

Long takes (shots of long duration) and sequence shots are frequently associated with a realist cinematographic style, partly on the basis of André Bazin's critique of montage. The narrative of *Roma città aperta* is what sets it apart both from other films of its time and from other neorealist films, and that narrative strongly conditions the shooting and the editing of the film, a matter to which we shall return in detail. For the time being, it is enough to say that the film has to cross-cut between storylines, between episodes proceeding in parallel, and between characters in different places. It makes for a fragmented way of shooting, and a heavy reliance on montage, and this shows in the average length of the shots in the film, which is 9.1 seconds. According to Barry Salt, the average shot length (ASL) of French and German films in the period 1934–9 is 12 seconds, while the average for Hollywood films 'went up from 8.5 seconds in the late 'thirties, to 9.5 seconds in the period 1940–1945, and finally to 10.5 seconds in the period 1946–1950.'[9] However, wherever possible, Rossellini uses quite long takes: in dialogue, for instance, he does not make much use of the reverse angle procedure. Eleven per cent of the shots in the film are twice as long as the ASL for the film as a whole, 4.5 per cent of them are more than three times as long, and ten shots are close to or well over a minute in length. As a result, a characteristic of the film is its switching from faster-cutting scenes of action and movement to a more contemplative rhythm in dialogue. Nevertheless, even this *pattern* of shot lengths conforms to the norm for both American and European films analysed by Barry Salt.[10]

To characterize accurately Rossellini's film style it is necessary to

make comparisons, and so I list a few samples of average shot lengths in neorealist films (where they are not attributed to Barry Salt, they are my own calculations):

- Rossellini: *Roma città aperta*, 9.1 seconds; *Paisà*, 9.7 seconds; *Germania Anno zero*, 17.4 seconds; *Stromboli*, 11.6 seconds (Salt)
- De Sica: *Sciuscià*, 7.8 seconds; *Ladri di biciclette*, 6.9 seconds; *Miracolo a Milano*, 6.3 seconds
- Visconti: *Ossessione*, 17.5 (Salt: 16.5) seconds; *La terra trema*, 18.2 seconds; *Bellissima*, 21.1 seconds
- Antonioni: *Cronaca di un amore*, 33 seconds (Salt); *I vinti*, 45 seconds (Salt); *La signora senza camelie*, 61 seconds (Salt)

Comparisons with earlier, non-neorealist Italian films can be made with reference to the following data (kindly supplied to me by Barry Salt):

- Alessandro Blasetti: *Vecchia guardia* (1935), 15 seconds; *La corona di ferro* (1941), 5 seconds; *La cena del beffe* (1941), 8 seconds; *Quattro passi tra le nuvole* (1942), 10 seconds
- Augusto Genina: *Lo squadrone bianco* (1936), 9 seconds
- Mario Camerini: *Il signor Max* (1937), 12 seconds
- Carmine Gallone: *Scipione l'Africano* (1937), 8.5 seconds
- Ferdinando Poggioli: *Addio giovinezza* (1940), 11 seconds
- Giuseppe De Robertis: *Uomini sul fondo* (1941), 3.5 seconds
- Mario Soldati: *Piccolo mondo antico* (1941), 12.5; seconds; *Malombra* (1942), 22 seconds
- Gianni Franciolini: *Fari nella nebbia* (1942), 12 seconds

(In appendices 17–19 these figures are translated into column charts in order to make it easier to compare films.)

The figures speak for themselves. *Roma città aperta*'s average shot length conforms to the conventions of the period, particularly in Hollywood, and can by no stretch of the imagination be described as privileging 'realist' long takes. Nor, however, is the suggestion, advanced by some, that Rossellini's 'documentary' style owes something to the influence of De Robertis given support by the data regarding *Uomini sul fondo* (with an ASL of 3.5 seconds). There are notable stylistic differences between *La nave bianca*, directed in 1941 by Rossellini, with supervision and storyboarding by De Robertis (though they quarrelled

over this film), and both *Un pilota ritorna* (1942) and *Roma città aperta* (1945).

Instead of being filmed in reverse-angle sequences, dialogue is generally staged in a single shot. Where more than two characters are involved Rossellini uses a three-dimensional composition, with characters in the foreground and others further from the camera, often in a 'V' formation, with its apex in the depth of the frame; in other words, two or more characters occupy the edges of the frame in the foreground, with their interlocutors in the centre of the frame further in the background (in a typical example of this composition used in an exterior the Brigadiere is accosted by the women at the bakery, and Agostino comes to find out what is happening). Comparison with *To Have and Have Not* shows that Hawks uses a similar technique for dialogue. Hence, Rossellini's avoidance of a reverse-angle procedure and his reliance on compositional strategies in a *mise en scène* procedure does not single him out from any norm that includes artists like Jean Renoir, Howard Hawks, and Orson Welles (though Renoir and Welles were precisely directors whom Bazin indicated as proponents of the new 'realist' style). Nevertheless, when Rossellini wants to contrast two characters (rather than morally unite them), he sometimes uses a different procedure. In the dialogue between Manfredi and Marina in her bedroom, and in the scenes in the Via Tasso Gestapo headquarters, he makes greater use of reverse angles. The avoidance of reverse angles in *Roma città aperta* is both a choice for its own sake and a corollary of the choice to eschew close-ups and use mainly medium shots – certainly, the procedures are two sides of the same coin. Rossellini's choices of shot length and scale of shot ('closeness' of the camera to the profilmic) appear every bit as pragmatically determined by diverse narrative and expressive requirements (the same is true for De Sica) as they are the product of poetic and stylistic principle, which cannot be said for the choices of Visconti and Antonioni, both of whom establish an entirely new relationship between montage and *mise en scène*. With the latter two directors narrative itself is conditioned by the choice of style, whereas with Rossellini, the style is fitted to the narrative and the 'vision' (which is further discussed in the chapter on *Paisà*). As a result, it has been difficult for critics to define Rossellini's style with any precision (and the same has been true for De Sica).

Rossellini's choices of 'scale of shot' are quite distinctive without, however, standing out to a large *degree* from the norm for the period. Barry Salt has tabulated what he calls the 'scale' or 'closeness' of shot

for a number of films, among them *Roma città aperta*. In the column charts in appendices 20–22, each column represents the (approximate) number of shots of that particular scale (or 'closeness') out of a total of 500 shots (in the cases of *Roma città aperta* and *Paisà* the charts cover every shot in the films). The charts bear out Salt's contention that a style in which the 'medium shot' predominated was widely adopted from the middle of the 1930s to the end of the 1940s. I have included two examples of films directed by von Sternberg to show that an alternative style was certainly possible (all of his films Salt has studied show a similar pattern). *Roma città aperta* adopts the widespread 'medium scale' style. However, it does so to an extreme extent.

Labels and criteria for the 'scale' or 'closeness' of a given shot can vary from one critic to another, and from one era to another. Here I shall use those attributed by Barry Salt to 'the nineteen-forties and later': Big Close Up shows head only, Close Up shows head and shoulders, Medium Close Up includes the body from the waist up, Medium Shot includes from just below the hip to above the head of upright actors, Medium Long Shot shows the body from the knee upwards, Long Shot shows the full height of the body, and Very Long Shot shows the actor small in the frame.[11] Longer distance shots can be a relative matter, because in Westerns, for example, where outdoor shooting was common and landscape played an important part, extreme long shots were common, whereas they were less frequent in other feature films, which were mostly shot in studios. *Roma città aperta* for the most part conforms to the conventions of a studio-shot film.

Because of the height-to-width ratio of the 'classic' screen ratio (approximately 1:1.35), you really need to shoot with a medium shot before you can properly show two or more people in the same shot talking to each other. Only if they are close together face-to-face, or at an angle to each other (as in the staircase dialogue between Francesco and Pina) can you use medium close-up (or occasionally close-up) for more than one person.

Rossellini prefers ensembles to reverse-angle sequences, and hence he makes great use of medium shots. When he then cuts to one person, he usually uses a medium close-up. Once that pattern has been set up in the film, a real close-up immediately takes on greater significance by breaking the pattern (as, for example, with Don Pietro's broken spectacles or when he curses Bergmann). There are a number of occasions where close-ups have been used because Rossellini has 'inserted' into a dialogue a shot that he probably shot later (realizing that he needed

some line of dialogue, or to replace a section where a mistake had been made). Examples are a shot of Pina during her first conversation with Manfredi in Francesco's apartment, a shot of Marina in her bedroom dialogue with Manfredi, a shot of Marcello (out of focus) in his dialogue with Don Pietro, and a shot of Bergmann addressing Manfredi in the torture scene, where he is clearly not against the background of the wall in the torture chamber where he says the rest of his lines (which has an 'expressionist' shadow thrown onto it), but against the wall in his office, which has a map pinned on it. In all these cases the lighting of the close-up fails to match that of the shots on either side of it.

All the films in appendices 20–22 have between 15 and 30 big close-up shots, with the exception of *Une partie de campagne*, which has fewer. There appears to be a wide range of between 40 and 80 close-up shots for most films, with the exception of von Sternberg's, which have far more, and Rossellini's, and Hawks's comedy, which have far fewer. Medium close-ups range between 70 and 90 for all films, including Rossellini's, except Hawks's, which have many more. *Roma città aperta* makes greater use of medium shots than any of the other films. Rossellini uses *more* medium shots than others to the same *degree* that he uses *fewer* close-up shots (and, when compared with Hawks, fewer medium close-ups than the American). The picture we get is of Rossellini using a fairly standard technique, but shifted towards longer (more distant) shots; he tends more towards medium and medium long, where others tend more towards medium close and close. His film's distinctive characteristic is the preponderance of medium shots, and the lack of close-up shots. This being the case, it is not surprising to find few reverse-angle sequences in dialogue (because such sequences are generally made up of close-up shots). The dialogue between Pina and Francesco on the staircase is a medium close-up shot of the two of them together, Francesco in the left of the frame looking frame right, where Pina sits in the depth of the image looking towards the camera.

On the matter of *Roma città aperta*'s style having something in common with the conventions of documentary films, it could certainly be said that Rossellini's choices of scale of shot lean away from the feature-film convention towards that of the documentary. Nevertheless, a more detailed examination of the *mise en scène* procedures that characterize the film requires us to relinquish any concern with documentary, and to start by simply describing components of the film's narrative style.

Various procedures are used to progressively open out scenes. One could be described initially as the 'pull back,' in which the camera

begins on a detail of the scene and progressively reveals more of the set or location, or more characters. This procedure is characteristic of Jean Renoir's and Orson Welles's style, though it is far less marked in *Roma città aperta* than in their films. Our introduction to the Via Tasso Gestapo headquarters starts from a shot of a map, whereupon the camera starts pulling back to reveal first Bergmann, who moves in front of the map, and then the Questore of Rome on the left of the frame. Similarly, but with a different use of the camera, a scene in Via Tasso begins with a medium close-up of Bergmann reading the headlines of the Resistance press, and then, at the sound off of a knock on his door, the camera tilts to show first the door at the far end of his office (with a rack-focus to bring the door into focus, putting Bergmann out of focus in the foreground), then the NCO entering, and finally the Questore. During this time, Bergmann has risen to his feet, and now, in the same shot, he moves over to the other end of his office to greet the Questore, and they both walk to the right to sit down facing each other in armchairs, with the camera following. At this point, incidentally, there is an apparently unnecessary cut to a very slightly different angle, which may have been motivated by a mistake in the long take as the action subsequently progressed. Shortly thereafter, Bergmann rises and returns to stand behind his desk, lit by the desk lamp. If you want to see how the film is lit, you can count the shadows on the wall behind him at this point to see how many floods are being used and where they are placed – all in order to make it look as though he is being illuminated by the lamp on his desk (a standard procedure in cinematography would be to throw light on the wall to cancel out these shadows).

The same opening-out effect can be achieved with a movement of the profilmic, rather than of the camera, as when our introduction to Don Pietro consists of his back completely filling the screen until he runs away from the camera after the football, revealing the boys and the wider view. The 'pull back' device, therefore, is used to introduce two of the protagonists into the film. It is a procedure used enormously by Renoir in *La Grande illusion* and *La Règle du jeu*, and everything points to Rossellini having been strongly influenced, particularly by the former.

Rossellini limits the movements (mostly panning and tilting) of his camera for the most part to those necessary for following characters around the interiors, the rooms: Francesco's flat, Bergmann's office, Marina's dressing room, Don Pietro's church and rectory, the typographer's. I have already remarked on the lack of pans, and the only notable one (apart from that over the rooftops behind the credits) is the final

shot of the film, where the boys walk past the camera, which follows them, revealing the Roman skyline (a shot that Jolanda Benvenuti says was directed by her – and if this is true, it might put into question much interpretation of 'Rossellini's' ending to the film). The only really significant tracking shot is the one in which Pina makes her confession to Don Pietro beside the railway (a shot that totals a minute and a half, broken by a two-second cutaway reverse angle to look at the fascist militia who so exercise Pina). A similar, but much shorter, shot is used for Don Pietro's ideological conversation with Marcello.

The opposite procedure from the 'pull back' has the camera shooting an 'establishing' shot of the whole context, and then either cutting or developing into a closer (usually medium) shot. This is how we enter into the sequence of the assault on the bakery: with a very long shot followed by a medium one of the Brigadiere, some women, and the sacristan – to which I have referred earlier. This is also how the sequence of the SS round-up at Via Montecuccoli starts, and how the episode of the partisan attack on the German convoy is introduced.

Just as scenes develop with the profilmic moving away from the camera, so others develop with the profilmic moving in towards the camera from long shot to medium: Agostino bearing bread from the assault on the bakery, Francesco and then Lauretta returning home at night, Don Pietro arriving at the religious articles shop, or approaching the camera across the floor of his church. In one of the latter shots (at nearly 50 seconds quite a long one), Don Pietro approaches the camera together with Pina, who is holding the 'books' filled with money. They stop upon seeing something in the direction of the camera which we still do not see. It is the Austrian deserter, in uniform, who then appears in the left foreground from behind the camera, walks towards Don Pietro, and, after exchanging a word with him, passes on behind the priest and waits for him, still with his back to the camera. The reason for the shot being set up this way becomes plain as soon as you notice that the actor playing the Austrian at this point is not the same as the one who plays him elsewhere in the film (Akos Tolnay). Whether Rossellini shot the scene of the Austrian meeting Don Pietro, but something went wrong in the processing, or he simply discovered at some later stage that he had forgotten to introduce the character (by all accounts, not inconceivable) I have no way of knowing. Accounts of his having to eat humble pie with a parish priest in order to get back into his church – after he had irritated the priest, not thinking he needed the location any more – might be connected with this sequence of the film.

Rossellini appears more interested in the interaction of people, and

its meaning, than in 'action' for its own sake, as the perfunctory treatment of the attack on the German convoy illustrates well. The camera angles in this sequence can be hard to reconcile, and the viewer is disoriented.[12] Admittedly, it is a 'transition' scene in the film, after the 'finale' of Pina's death. It may also illustrate something else. Tag Gallagher claims that '[i]n an innovation, for which he has never been acknowledged,' Rossellini 'discovered that when a shot's pace seemed slow, its rhythm could be sped up by subtly and painstakingly editing out single frames in the middle of the shot – the jumps would be imperceptible.'[13] I have been unable to detect any shots where this has obviously been done, but something analogous has been done in the episode of the attack on the convoy. As the German trucks go under the bridge, Rossellini has removed a whole sequence of frames, but this is because the third and fourth truck were too far behind the first two, and left us waiting with nothing happening on screen. The removal of the frames is perceptible, however, because the amount of dust hanging in the entrance to the underpass suddenly changes.

Nonetheless, an observation by Mario Calzini, in his report on the condition of the negative of *Roma città aperta* to the Cineteca Nazionale, suggests that there may be more to Gallagher's account than I can detect:

> In the body of some scenes, there are a few frames missing, and these omissions are repeated in successive texts [he is referring to subsequent prints and negatives struck from the original negative], which are a sign of problems arising during the original editing. In these cases it is not possible to guess how many frames are missing.

Apart from the SS round-up at the apartment building and the torture scene in Via Tasso, the rest of the film mainly consists of people coming in (or going out) through doorways: this is how scenes of dialogue are endowed with dynamism, and because of this there are only two *temps morts* in the film: the dialogue between Pina and Francesco, and the first minute-long shot of Marina in her dressing room. The latter scene develops first with Marina's own entry through the door, then with that of Lauretta, who goes back out again (very disapprovingly) when Ingrid comes in. Incidentally, the two long takes of Marina in her dressing room (each a minute long) have mismatched lighting, owing to the change of camera set-up, and hence of lighting, when the camera moves to the wall where her mirror hangs.

Dialogue in Francesco's apartment takes place in a continual entry

the shame involves a selective 'use' of the film, and does not fully account for the impact the film had on audiences coming to it with very different perspectives. In his next two films, Rossellini begins to examine the theme of shame so lucidly that he ends by losing the support of his audience.

The Narrative: Story and Plot

In a monograph on literary neorealism, Lucia Re proposes that an ideologizing or mythicizing process operates in the bringing together of isolated 'chronicles' of the Resistance:

> The texts of Resistance writing recount episodes and scenes of what is implicitly a single narrative; they are subplots that converge ideally into a single governing plot, which is that of history itself. The teleological perspective of the Liberation as the end of the conflict is what gives these mini-narratives the sense of an ending; it allows the partisans themselves to narrate the immediate past and the present as causally motivated and oriented towards a meaningful conclusion. The structural principle of causality which motivates Resistance narrative and informs the plot coincides with the partisan *cause* itself, that is, the *mythos* whereby historical time, geographical space, and human action are imaginatively grasped together in the form of a tale unfolding towards the recovery of (lost) freedom. This *mythos* is in turn what motivates the very act of writing as a perlocutionary speech act, intended to elicit action on the part of the reader in the form of solidarity and participation in the partisan struggle.[22]

The process that Re describes could be seen as operating in *Roma città aperta*, but its scope is most appropriately applied to the 'whole' of Resistance narrative, taken as a corpus. With this one, particular artefact, this single film, viewed as an aesthetic object, our perspective requires that we look first at the generic narrative shape that is given to the fusing together of a number of separate 'stories.' In this perspective, we need to follow the 'aestheticizing' process, as well as the 'ideologizing' process that Re describes; that is to say, the factors that contribute to the 'beauty' of a narrative made out of raw, fragmented chronicle, whose elaborated 'form' is supplied by its ideological function. A persuasive suggestion has been made by Marina Zancan, who develops a 'cognitive' hypothesis in many ways remarkably similar to the one that I have, in the chapter on realism, been applying to neorealist cinematic

narrative. Rossellini, Amidei, Fellini, Zavattini, De Sica, and Calvino are all on record as maintaining that their artefacts arose out of their own experiences, and those of everyone around them, as though that *explained* them and justified them. What kind of *explanation* is that? Zancan's argument is long and detailed, and we can only sample it here. The disorder of war, she asserts, puts into crisis the family/social ontology of the subject, interfering with what is regarded as the function of human existence, reproduction.

> This triggers a process of socialisation of knowledge and of discourse-production, linked in its turn to individuals, to material needs and to life lived in the present. This mechanism of production in circulation of knowledge is characterised by at least three important features: 1) a direct relation between knowledge and practical life ... 2) a tendency to abolish the distance between addresser and addressee ... and 3) legitimation becomes self-legitimation, within the cognitive process itself.

She quotes Italo Calvino's contention (in the preface to his novel *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*) that narrative seemed to come from 'la voce anonima dell'epoca' ('the anonymous voice of the epoch'), and continues:

> It is within this process that there arises, during the two years of clandestine struggle, a diffuse and continuous narrative practice, carried out by many voices, at the oral level, that has devised expressive forms dictated by the 'immediacy' of people's needs: a practice that lies objectively at the basis of written narrative ... Episodes of combat, people dying, killings, get communicated in story-form: the writing of these two years is produced by a community that *tells its own story*, and this continual story, first oral and then written, is an integral part of the daily life of the community itself ... The passage from the oral to the written, in the years 1943 to 1945, takes place, therefore, in a context in which the *protagonists* have a determining function: *the person who is writing* is firmly integrated in the community that produced both action and communication (first he is the combatant and then, on top of that, the writer); the *addressee* is directly present, and it is the *community* itself that *legitimates* the discourse produced; the *means of production* belong to the same community that produces the discourse.
> ...
> However, between wartime narrative and the neorealist novel come two 'minor genres,' the *memoir* and the *short story*, that need to be analysed as intermediary forms between the narrative and the novel, that still bear the

> strong marks of the themes and forms of resistance writing, but which are also already within the literary institutional sphere ... The writing of memoirs offers the immediate postwar Italian literary context two key ideas, recognised as principles operating in the previous two years: a) that it was historically, culturally and politically necessary to socialise, through writing, one's own experience and the knowledge that it had produced; b) that between the true and the beautiful there existed a relationship of equivalence deriving from the value inherent in the true-lived-narrated.[23]

Applying Zancan's reasoning to cinema (and to *Roma città aperta* in particular), therefore, it would not *just* be a matter of professional filmmakers organizing diverse narrative materials into a coherent dramatic artefact, guided by the signifying practices of the cinema. Particular factors were at work at a primary level, at this historical moment, giving both the raw material and its aesthetic elaboration a special 'truth' status (which the artists themselves *refer to*, but do not articulate discursively). However, it is with the secondary elaboration (corresponding, in Zancan, to the steps from oral to written narrative to 'novel'), involving the signifying practices of the cinema, that I want to start.

Roma città aperta, a single, coherent narrative, is very different from *Paisà*, which consists of six separate narratives told one after the other. The first film recounts one story; the second film recounts six stories. However, the genesis of the two films was very similar. Originally, *Roma città aperta* was to have been very like *Paisà*, a film in episodes, consisting of four different, separate stories, with the title *Storie di ieri* (*Stories of Yesterday*). I shall give each one a title (using the name of its protagonist in italics) for easy reference:

1. *Don Pietro:* A priest helps the partisans, is arrested by the SS, condemned to death, and put before a firing squad. This story conflates two different figures:

(a) Don Giuseppe Morosini, who was arrested on 4 January 1944, condemned to death by a German military tribunal on 15 February for aiding the partisans, and executed on 3 April at Forte Bravetta – where Don Pietro's execution was filmed. The firing squad did not kill him, and the Italian officer commanding it finished him off with a pistol shot to the back of his head. At an entirely separate execution on 2 February 1944, eleven partisans were being executed at Forte Bravetta when the Italian firing squad deliberately aimed away from the prisoners. The German officer commanding the squad finished off the prisoners with his pistol.

(b) Don Pietro Pappagallo, who was arrested on 29 January 1944 for supplying false papers to partisans, and helping them get across the German lines to refuge with the Allies, and was shot on 24 March together with 334 other prisoners in the Fosse Ardeatine in reprisal for a partisan attack on a German regiment the previous afternoon.

2. *Manfredi:* A partisan leader escapes across the rooftops of Rome when the SS come to his lodgings to arrest him (a story based on the experiences of the scriptwriter Sergio Amidei, and generally regarded as portraying a partisan leader, Celeste Negarville, who was never, in fact, arrested).

3. *Pina:* A woman tries to make contact with her husband, who is being held prisoner by the Germans in an army barracks, and is shot by a German NCO (a story based on the true events surrounding the death of Maria Teresa Gullace recounted later in this chapter (p. 163) – Aldo Fabrizi, who will play Don Pietro in the film, was an eye-witness to this shooting). Pina (not Gullace) lives in an apartment in a block of flats, Via Montecuccoli 17, off Via Prenestina (the building still looks much as it did when the film was made).

4. *Romoletto:* A band of children carry out acts of sabotage against the Fascists and the Germans in occupied Rome (there are conflicting accounts of the origins of this story, but it was probably based on a Hungarian novel of the turn of the century).

However, these *four* stories, the four originally intended as the *Storie di ieri*, are merely the ones conventionally recognized as being the sources of the film. If we look at the narrative, we can see other narrative components that have, at least part of the time, their own autonomy:

5. *Bergmann*: A German Gestapo officer, with the help of the Italian police, hunts down and interrogates partisan leaders in order to break up their organization. This story refers to Major (later Lieutenant Colonel) Kappler, who operated from offices and cells in a building rented by the German embassy, located in Via Tasso. The Italian chief of police (the *Questore* of Rome) refers to Pietro Caruso, who was tried and shot at the end of the war, and whose actual death was somewhat gruesomely recorded by Visconti in what is definitely a documentary section of the part-documentary, part-re-enacted film, *Giorni di gloria.*

6. *Marina*: A working-class girl climbs the social ladder by working as a nightclub entertainer and prostituting herself with German officers. She becomes both the girlfriend of a partisan leader and the object of the lesbian attentions of a Gestapo officer, Ingrid, who feeds her cocaine habit in exchange for information leading to the capture of the partisan

boyfriend, with whom she has quarrelled over the drug habit. Her closest friend, Lauretta, is the sister of Pina. Marina lives in the wealthy Parioli district of Rome, but she is, in fact, the daughter of the concierge of a commercial building in Via Tiburtina, a working-class district.

Stefano Roncoroni, Ugo Pirro, and Tag Gallagher chronicle the way the various threads are brought together into one narrative.[24] There is no doubt that the central figure in the operation is Sergio Amidei, whose role in neorealism is an interesting one. On *Roma città aperta*, besides being perhaps the main source for the film, he is also credited with the role of assistant director (Jolanda Benvenuti says he was hardly ever on the set and, independently, Vito Annichiarico – the boy who plays Marcello – says he never saw him). Certainly, Amidei was both a promoter of the neorealist aesthetic and an obstacle to some of its features. As time passed, it became clear that he was not entirely in harmony with Rossellini's aesthetic aims. When it came to making *Paisà*, he was gradually distanced from more and more of the episodes, and he more or less ejected himself at an early stage from the writing team on *Ladri di biciclette*. By all accounts, Amidei was a prickly person, but that cannot explain all his differences with his neorealist collaborators. When Rossellini got Fellini to smarten up the dialogue on *Roma città aperta*, Amidei appears to have recognized the value of the contribution (though this may have had a lot to do with Amidei's awareness that, coming from Trieste in the north, he had difficulty with good Roman dialogue, whereas Fellini wrote material for popular Roman stage performers every day). He remained a close collaborator with Rossellini throughout the neorealist period (though not on *Europa '51*, *Dov'è la libertà?*, *Amore*, *Viaggio in Italia*, and *Francesco Giullare di Dio*). Apart from his work with Rossellini, and on Lizzani's *Cronache di poveri amanti*, however, the other films he wrote for in this period tended to be comedies or films bearing a strong element of 'contamination' with conventional genre cinema – even though they might have often contained an element of social-political satire. He himself describes his approach to *Roma città aperta* as having, at the outset at least, few ambitions to innovation. If we put all these things together, we might conclude that the large role Amidei played in the conception and execution of *Roma città aperta* is one of the factors accounting for the elements of conventionality that critics have detected in the film. Amidei brought the 'subjects' of the partisan leader, and of the Gullace shooting, while Alberto Consiglio furnished the subject of Don Pietro. It could be, as Gallagher tends to suggest, that the highly scripted, compact character of *Roma*

città aperta's narrative owes much to the dominant influence of Amidei at a time when Rossellini was just beginning to develop his own aesthetic. Certainly, a study of the genesis of *Paisà* shows a film shifting, in its filming, a great distance from the conventionality of the original sections scripted by Amidei, Alfred Hayes, and Klaus Mann, and indicates that Rossellini made more and more use of Fellini as the production progressed.

In discussing the narrative of *Roma città aperta* it is helpful to distinguish between 'story' and 'plot.' Victor Shklovsky pointed out that a narrative recounts a series of events that are supposed to have taken place in chronological order over a period of time. To this order he gave the name *fabula*. However, the order in which the written or filmed artefact presents these events to the reader or viewer may not preserve the chronological order in which they are supposed to have happened, and the reading or viewing experience probably will occupy the reader or viewer for a very different period of time than that covered by the events recounted. To this order he gave the name *syuzhet*. It has now become commonplace to use 'story' for *fabula*, and 'plot' for *syuzhet*, which is what I shall do. However, since it can be difficult for the untrained reader to remember which is which, I am going to add a mnemonic device to each term, giving 'event-story' (the events as they happened) and 'recounted-plot' (as they are recounted to the viewer in the plot of the film), so that the reader will not have to keep returning here for a reminder.

In the case of *Roma città aperta*, not only are the six event-stories we have identified above merged into one recounted-plot, but each individual event-story is fragmented and dispersed in its own recounted-plot in order that the four event-stories may proceed in parallel in the overall recounted-plot.

Nowadays, we are accustomed, in novels and in films, to following parallel stories told in disjunctive blocks, which converge in a dénouement. John Grisham's or Elmore Leonard's novels are typical examples. Raymond Chandler did not tell his stories that way. If we compare *Roma città aperta* with *To Have and Have Not*, we can see that neither did Hollywood in those days (which is one reason why Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* is extraordinary for its time). Hawks's film could have followed the Free French story, Slim's story, and Steve's story in parallel, bringing them eventually together. Instead, the narrative remains with the protagonist, Steve (Humphrey Bogart), who holds together all the

subplots, sometimes in a merely formal way by being a 'witness,' and always constitutes a coherent point of view on the various threads of the narrative. *Roma città aperta* uses montage to keep its parallel 'chronicles' separate to a large extent in the first half, each block establishing a different person's perspective (Bergmann's, Marina's, and Don Pietro's), with 'links' formed in particular by Pina, who more and more serves as a unifying point of view for the viewer, and whose death, for that very reason, leaves the viewer with a sense of loss and disorientation. Pina, however, drops out of the story altogether in the middle, and this is one of the reasons why the actress Clara Calamai would not make up her mind to take the role when it was offered to her. Calamai's reluctance is a 'symptom,' as it were, of conventional cinema's discomfort with what Rossellini and Amidei were doing, an explanation of which is suggested in the reflections of Marina Zancan I have just quoted. The parallel threads come together, as both the climax and dénouement of the parallel montage narrative process, in the sequence of the SS raid on Via Montecuccoli and the killing of Pina. This sequence brings the narrative to an end, after which it has to be 'restarted.' This is effected through the rather arbitrary (from the recounted-plot point of view) attack on the convoy carrying away German prisoners – a sequence not really 'linked' to anything else in the film, neither prepared for nor taken up later – which serves as a transition into the scene that properly restarts the narrative, that in which Manfredi and Francesco meet Marina in Flavio's *trattoria*. In fact, the climactic music continues, without a break, from the shooting of Pina to the end of the scene of the attack on the convoy, whereupon the scene of Flavio's *trattoria* takes up the story with diegetic sound only. Clearly, the filmmakers were aware of the need for some device to maintain narrative continuity. All that remained thereafter was to bring together the Manfredi–Don Pietro thread and the Bergmann thread. Gradually, Don Pietro takes over as the unifying point of view for the viewer. Once again, the film comes to a stop with the death of Manfredi, the curse of Don Pietro, the removal of the fur coat from the prostrate Marina, and Hartmann's epilogue: 'We are the master race!' The execution of Don Pietro is a 'coda,' required by the exigencies of *chronicling*, and is told through a dispersal of points of view, finally settling on that of the boys.

The film, therefore, breaks into three: (1) up to Pina's death, (2) up to Manfredi's death, (3) Don Pietro's execution. Each dénouement is a death.

In order to get a clear picture of how *Roma città aperta*'s narrative is

constructed, it is useful to separate event-story and recounted-plot, and lay them out one after the other. The description of the recounted-plot (table 1 on p. 153), in particular, will be decidedly indigestible for the reader, but any conclusions must be based on complete data made openly available – even though some readers may prefer to glance at the data, and then take my word for it. To proceed, we shall need to give a status to historical 'referents' that are not explicitly referred to in the film, but which the Italian (and especially the Roman) audience of 1945–6 would see as being components of the event-story. Moreover, for brevity's sake, we shall apply this analysis only up to the shooting of Pina, merely mentioning what happens afterwards. Since the event-story involves (as we have seen earlier) six parallel actions, we shall lay them out one after the other, and then, at a second stage, see how the recounted-plot transforms them into one narrative. Each of the six 'threads' of the event-story will be identified by the name we gave it at the beginning of this section, which is the name of a character, and will be in *italics*, to distinguish it from a reference to the actual character himself or herself. The recounted-plot we are going to concentrate on, therefore, moves from one point in time (the SS raid on Manfredi's landlady) to another point in time (Don Pietro cradling the body of Pina in his lap). However, the event-stories contain material *previous* to the start of this chronology, referred to or alluded to in the narrative. Sometimes, it is slightly arbitrary as to which of the six 'threads' we shall attach this *previous* material, and sometimes the same material belongs to more than one thread.

Italian films are split, for showing in cinemas, into two halves (*primo tempo* and *secondo tempo*), to permit the selling of confectionery (from which cinemas derive much of their profit margin) in the interval. *Roma città aperta* is split after the attack on the German convoy; the *secondo tempo* begins with Manfredi and Francesco arriving at Flavio's restaurant. Hence we shall be examining all but the last scene of the *primo tempo* of the film.

In what follows, each numbered 'paragraph' of event-story (i, ii, iii, etc.) refers to a continuous 'section' of recounted-plot in the film (an unbroken sequence of 'scenes'). However, we follow each event-story 'thread' one by one. In a subsequent part of this chapter, on the 'plot' of the film, we shall see how these 'thread-sections' of scenes are interwoven (through cross-cutting or parallel montage) in the recounted-plot of the film. In other words, we analyse the narrative structure of the film by first dismantling and then reassembling it.

1. *Don Pietro*

(a) Previous event-story material referred to or implicit in the recounted-plot:
Don Pietro Pellegrini has contributed 'much' to the Resistance in Rome – this 'much' is referred to in the recounted-plot (at the printing shop) – but we are not told what has been involved. He is the parish priest for the working-class Prenestina quarter of Rome, his church is San Clemente, he lives in the rectory beside the church, and he is trusted by his parishioners.

(b) Event-story material covered by the chronology of the recounted-plot:
(i) Don Pietro organizes and referees a football match for the boys of his parish. Marcello comes to tell him that he is needed in Via Montecuccoli. En route, he discusses with Marcello whether piety or political commitment is the highest priority in the current circumstances. The two of them encounter Agostino, the sacristan, bringing home bread from the raided bakery.
(ii) Don Pietro is let into Francesco's apartment by Pina to meet Manfredi, who has an appointment that evening with a representative of a band of partisans in the hills above Tagliacozzo, which it is no longer safe for him to keep. He asks Don Pietro to keep the appointment instead, at the Tiburtina bridge, and to pass money to the representative.
(iii) Don Pietro goes to a religious articles shop and is taken into the basement, where he meets first Francesco (whom he informs about Manfredi's having been hidden by Pina in his flat) and then Gino, a partisan leader, who gives him two books in which the pages have been replaced by banknotes.
(iv) He enters his rectory, where Agostino is boiling cabbage, and Pina is waiting to make her confession. He makes a package that Pina insists on carrying. He accompanies Pina out of the rectory and through the church of San Clemente, where he is approached by the Austrian deserter, whom he promises to help. He then returns to Pina, and they converse as they walk along beside the railway. He meets the representative of the partisans and hands over the package of books.
(v) Don Pietro admits the children into the church for catechism.
(vi) He is arranging pews with the other children in the church when he is informed by Marcello that Romoletto has bombs in the attic.
(vii) Don Pietro and Marcello, wearing surplices and carrying the Holy Sacrament, arrive at the entrance to Via Montecuccoli 17, claiming that there is a dying man upstairs, and the Brigadiere supports their story.

They climb to the attic, where Don Pietro tears open the door to the roof and takes the mortar bomb and the machine gun from Romoletto.
(viii) Don Pietro and Marcello hurry down the stairs carrying the weapons.
(ix) Don Pietro sees the Fascist soldiers coming up the stairs below him and slips into Pina's flat.
(x) In sound off, the Fascist soldiers hear the sound of the frying pan with which Don Petro hits the grandfather to quieten him.
(xi) He prays over the apparently sleeping grandfather as the Fascist soldiers enter the room, look around, and go out again.
(xii) Don Pietro and Marcello are emerging into the passage between the street and the courtyard of the apartment building, when Pina dashes through.
(xiii) Don Pietro grasps Marcello tightly to him, and covers Marcello's eyes with his hand.
(xiv) Don Pietro lifts Marcello from Pina's body and passes him to the Brigadiere. He kneels down and takes Pina's body in his lap.
(c) Subsequent to the death of Pina:
Don Pietro takes Marcello to his rectory, and lets him sleep on the sofa. He celebrates Benediction in church. He arranges false documents in the name of Giovanni Episcopo for Manfredi, and refuge in a monastery for the Austrian deserter. He is about to lead Manfredi, the deserter, and Francesco into hiding when the Germans arrest him, take him to their Via Tasso headquarters, interrogate him, and make him watch the torture of Manfredi. He curses the Germans and then repents for his outburst. He is shot at Forte Bravetta.

2. *Manfredi*
(a) Previous event-story material referred to or implicit in the recounted-plot:
Viewers would know certain historical facts – in addition to those recounted in appendix 2 ('Historical background for neorealis'):
(i) In August 1943 the Badoglio government declared Rome an *open city* (Athens, for example, was so designated), which was not to be militarily occupied or fought over – but no one properly observed this agreement, and in fact the Germans occupied the city, and the Allies bombed the rail depots in the San Lorenzo quarter, causing destruction in surrounding quarters (Via Montecuccoli is located beside the main rail shunting yards).
(ii) By January 1944 the Allied military advance had reached an area

north of Naples and south of Rome – for various reasons, the Allies failed to occupy the Rome area as soon as they might.
(iii) The city was nominally governed by Mussolini's Fascist republic, its bureaucracy, and its police, but the Germans had the real control.
(iv) Partisan bands, organized by the Committee for National Liberation (in which the Communist Party, whose clandestinely printed official newspaper was *L'Unità*, played a prominent role), operated against the Fascists and the Germans in the city.
(v) The Germans combatted these groups by using informers and spies, capturing one member, and using torture to get him or her to give them details about other members, a strategy in which they were very successful.
(vi) The Gestapo interrogation headquarters were in a building in Via Tasso.
(vii) The action of the event-story would have taken place in the period between January and April 1944 (Maria Teresa Gullace was killed on 3 March 1944, Don Morosini was arrested in January and shot in April).
(viii) The Allies entered Rome in June 1944.

Luigi Ferraris was born in Turin in 1906, was arrested in Bologna in 1928, and was sentenced to twelve years' imprisonment for conspiracy to subvert the state. He escaped in transit, and hid in France (information from his police dossier is given to Bergmann by the Questore of Rome). He now calls himself Giorgio Manfredi, is working in Italy as a leader of the Committee for National Liberation, and is a member of the Communist Party. (He starts to tell Don Pietro that he is a communist in Via Tasso, but is taken away before he can say it all.) He has made an appointment to meet in Rome a member of a partisan band that is operating in the hills outside Rome, in order to pass them money from the committee (he tells Don Pietro this). During an air raid, he started a romantic liaison with a nightclub singer called Marina Mari, but the relationship is going sour (he tells Pina this). He has been avoiding her, and she has been trying to contact him. He has at some point expressed disapproval of her cocaine habit, and tried to get her to stop taking the drug (this comes out in the quarrel between them after Pina's death). A Gestapo agent has photographed the two of them together in Rome, and Bergmann has connected his face with that of a man in a group photograph of Communists (Bergmann shows the two photographs to the Questore of Rome).
(b) Event-story material covered by the chronology of the recounted-plot:
(i) Manfredi is listening to a BBC news broadcast on the radio in an

apartment by the Piazza di Spagna when the SS arrive to arrest him. He escapes across the roof to the Spanish embassy.
(ii) The next morning he turns up outside Francesco's apartment in Via Montecuccoli. He asks to speak to Don Pietro.
(iii) Manfredi talks with Pina about the assault on the bakery. He gives Lauretta a message for Marina. He recounts his affair with Marina to Pina.
(iv) He asks Don Pietro to take money to Tiburtina for the partisans, as in *Don Pietro* ii.
(v) Manfredi is waiting for Francesco in his apartment that night. He is warned to lie low. He reads *L'Unità*. When Pina rushes in, they look out the window in alarm together with Francesco at the explosion in the rail depot.
(vi) The next morning Manfredi is shining his shoes in readiness for his friend's wedding, when the Brigadiere knocks to salute the bridegroom.
(vii) He and Francesco open the window and look down at the street when Pina rushes in to warn them about the Germans.
(viii) They withdraw from the window.
(ix) Manfredi escapes from the building through the window of the laundry room.
(c) Subsequent to the death of Pina:
Manfredi leads the attack on the German convoy that frees Francesco. They go to a *trattoria* to eat that evening, and are informed that there has been a big round-up of partisans; they meet Marina, who invites them to stay at her flat. Manfredi quarrels there with Marina over her drug habit, and afterwards she overhears him discussing their meeting at Don Pietro's the next day to escape from Rome to a monastery in the hills. He tells Francesco to lie low because he is too upset by the death of Pina to be useful to the Resistance at the moment. Manfredi meets Don Pietro and the Austrian at the priest's rectory, and is arrested on the street when they leave. He is taken to Via Tasso and tortured to death by the Gestapo without revealing any information about his associates.

3. *Pina*
(a) Previous event-story material referred to or implicit in the recounted-plot:
Pina is the daughter of a plumber, brought up in a working-class quarter of Rome, a widow with a son (Marcello), who until recently worked at the Breda engineering works, but was made redundant when the Germans confiscated the machinery to take to Germany (she tells Man-

fredi part of this). She got to know Francesco, her neighbour, from his hammering a nail in their party wall and knocking a mirror off the wall on her side (she reminisces in the conversation with Francesco on the stairs). They have been planning their wedding for a long time, but have kept having to put it off, and she is pregnant from him. Pina believes in God, and is about to be married in church by Don Pietro (she tells Manfredi this). She has been involved in two raids on bakers' shops in the past week. She lives in the flat next to Francesco's with her sister, Lauretta, and two other couples: one couple about whom we never learn anything, and another (the wife is referred to by the 'grandfather' as Elida) who have four children (Otello, who is Marcello's friend, Andreina, another younger girl, and a toddler boy) and the elderly father of one of them, just referred to as the 'grandfather.' We are not told if, and how, these people are related to each other, but it was the rule for homeless refugees to be lodged in existing households. From an exchange between Lauretta and Elida, the mother of Otello, we learn that the apartment is the latter's home, in which Pina and Lauretta rent a room and the use of the kitchen. The grandfather sleeps in the same room as the other, unnamed couple.

(b) Event-story material covered by the chronology of the recounted-plot:

(i) Pina participates in the assault on the bakery. She gives some loaves to the Brigadiere. She sees Manfredi waiting, approaches him with caution, and lets him into Francesco's apartment. She calls Marcello down from Romoletto's attic, and sends him to get Don Pietro. She talks to Manfredi. She goes out to prepare some coffee in her own flat.

(ii) She returns with coffee, and talks with Manfredi some more until Don Pietro arrives, at which point she leaves. She catches Marcello eavesdropping at the door and sends him off to get water.

(iii) At Don Pietro's rectory she waits for his return, then accompanies him out (see *Don Pietro* iv).

(iv) When Don Pietro comes back from talking to the Austrian, they continue as in *Don Pietro* iv.

(v) In the evening, she bursts into Francesco's apartment, as in *Manfredi* v.

(vi) Angry scenes between Pina and the boys returning home after their exploits, and involving Lauretta.

(vii) Her conversation with Francesco on the landing.

(viii) She rushes into Francesco's flat the next morning to warn him and Manfredi about the Germans.

(ix) Together with the other tenants Pina is herded into the courtyard by the Germans, and slaps a soldier who flirts with her. She sees Francesco being taken away, and chases after him, eventually being gunned down by the Germans.

4. *Romoletto*
(a) Previous event-story material referred to or implicit in the recounted-plot:
Romoletto is guided by the Communist Party's policy for all anti-fascist parties to lay aside their political differences and unite in the struggle against Fascism and Nazism (Marcello quotes him to Don Pietro). He believes women are 'trouble,' and will not admit the girls to his conspiracies (Marcello quotes him to Andreina). [Note: in the narrative thread I am calling *Romoletto* I include Marcello and the friends who live with him, Otello and Andreina.]
(b) Event-story material covered by the chronology of the recounted-plot:
(i) Romoletto has a hideout on the roof of the building, where he plots with the children of the Via Montecuccoli tenants to carry out actions against the Germans and the Fascists (Marcello sneaks up there when he can).
(ii) Marcello interrupts Don Pietro's football match and walks to Via Montecuccoli, as in *Don Pietro* i.
(iv) He eavesdrops on the conversation between Manfredi and Don Pietro in Francesco's apartment, and is sent to get water by his mother, but he sneaks upstairs to Romoletto.
(v) Romoletto commends his fellow-conspirators for their action in blowing up a petrol store at the railway depot.
(vi) The boys are afraid of the scolding and spanking they will receive from their parents for being out after dark. Marcello and Otello are scolded by Pina. Marcello talks to Andreina about the role of women in the Resistance. Marcello refuses to divulge secrets to Francesco, and asks if he can call him 'papà' from the next day onwards.
(vii) Marcello arrives at the last minute at Don Pietro's church for catechism.
(viii) He is arranging pews with the other children in the church when Andreina rushes into the church with two little ones, and tells Marcello that the Germans and the Fascists are at their house.
(ix)–(xv) This event-story material corresponds to *Don Pietro* (vii–xiii).
(c) Subsequent to the death of Pina:
Marcello sleeps at Don Pietro's rectory, and the next morning is in the

churchyard, saying goodbye to Francesco, when the men leave for the monastery in the hills. By calling Francesco back to give him a scarf, he saves him from being arrested by the Germans. The boys watch the execution of Don Pietro.

5. *Bergmann*
(a) Previous event-story material referred to or implicit in the recounted-plot:
Bergmann's application of the Schröder Plan is producing results, and large numbers of Resistance organizers are being rounded up (Flavio, the restaurauteur, tells Manfredi of some cases, and Francesco tells him of others).
(b) Event-story material covered by the chronology of the recounted-plot:
(i) The SS raid Manfredi's apartment, but cannot pursue him across the rooftops because the Spanish embassy is next door.
(ii) Sturmbannführer Bergmann explains to the Questore of Rome the Schröder plan for dealing with terrorism, and for rounding up deserters in occupied cities. An NCO informs him that the SS have not found Manfredi at his apartment, and Bergmann shows the Questore a photograph of Manfredi and Marina taken on the Spanish Steps. The Questore says that Manfredi is known as one of the leaders of Committee for National Liberation. Bergmann shows him another photograph in which Manfredi appears. They are interrupted by a scream of pain from a *'professore'* who is being interrogated in another room. They discuss Marina.
(iii) Ingrid visits Marina in her nightclub dressing room, bringing cocaine.
(iv) Bergmann is reading the clandestine Resistance press when the Questore arrives with a file on Manfredi (Luigi Ferraris). Bergmann tells the Questore that Manfredi has been seen in the Prenestino quarter, and about the sabotage in the rail depot. Bergmann goes into the salon to get Ingrid, and shows her the file.
(v) The SS carry out a raid on Via Montecuccoli as a result of what Bergmann has found out in (iv).
(c) Subsequent to the death of Pina:
Ingrid finds out from Marina where Manfredi will be (at Don Pietro's) the next morning. The prisoners are brought in and interrogated. Bergmann gives Ingrid a flask of cocaine for Marina, whom Ingrid entertains in the salon. Hartmann tells Bergmann that the Germans are hated

for spreading only death and destruction. Hartmann supervises Don Pietro's execution, and finishes him off with a pistol shot when the firing squad fails to kill him.

6. *Marina*

(a) Previous event-story material referred to or implicit in the recounted-plot:
Marina Mari is the daughter of the concierge of the building in which Pina's father had his plumber's shop, and a friend of Lauretta. She works (together with Lauretta) as a well-known nightclub singer (the Questore admires her). She and Manfredi started a relationship when she showed no fear during an air raid. Manfredi disapproves of her drug habit, and wants to break off the relationship. Marina is supplied with cocaine by a lesbian Gestapo officer, Ingrid, who hopes to prise out of her the whereabouts of Manfredi. Marina prostitutes herself to the Germans to support her comfortable lifestyle, because she despises the life of ordinary families (she tells this to Manfredi). Before Pina is shot, it is not made entirely clear whether she has, at any point, told the Gestapo where to find Manfredi (the SS expected to find him at the apartment in Piazza di Spagna, and then at Via Montecuccoli).
(b) Event-story material covered by the chronology of the recounted-plot:
(i) Marina telephones Manfredi's lodgings while the SS are searching the place.
(ii) Marina paces her dressing room, needing more cocaine. Lauretta tells her that she has seen Manfredi at Francesco's, and gives her Manfredi's message. Ingrid enters. Marina leaves the room to perform.
(iii) Marina telephones Manfredi's lodgings.
[Note: As far as the event-story is concerned, Marina's is the least carefully thought out thread. It is not clear from the *story* whether Marina is weak or is an opportunist: on the questions of Marina's motivations and of her precise actions, the *story* is incomplete, and leaves the viewer to surmise.]
(c) Subsequent to the death of Pina:
Marina meets Manfredi at Flavio's restaurant, where she has been waiting, hoping to catch him. She invites them to stay at her apartment, quarrels with Manfredi over her cocaine habit, overhears his plans, and tells Ingrid over the telephone (with Bergmann listening in) that she will call again later. We next see her receiving a fur coat from Ingrid in Via Tasso, confirming that she told the Gestapo where to arrest Man-

fredi. Hartmann brings her from the salon to the torture chamber, and looks on in alarm when he realizes what he has brought her to. She faints. Ingrid retrieves the coat, instructing the NCO to 'hold her for a while, and then ...'

7. *Miscellaneous*
(b) Event-story material covered by the chronology of the recounted-plot:
(i) Francesco is returning home from work when he is stopped by Fascist soldiers, and his papers are checked. Arriving home, he pauses in the passage and sees Lauretta delivered home by a German officer and stashing away the money she receives from him. Francesco turns and walks away.

The laying out of the plot (table 1) reveals a number of empirical features. Before thread-section 21, most thread-sections are of at least 1.5 minutes' duration; from number 21 onwards, none is that long, and most are of less than half that duration. Therefore, the parallel montage (cross-cutting between thread-sections) accelerates considerably on the morning of the wedding and of Pina's death. This is partly because threads have been brought together, to a large extent, in one time and place, but the rate of cross-cutting is also a rhetorical and stylistic device. Indeed, because of the rapid cross-cutting, the viewer gets the *impression* that from 21 onwards plot-time and story-time are coinciding in the real viewing-time, whereas in actual fact this is not the case at all. Plot-time considerably compresses, or elides, story-time: some two hours of story-time are compressed into ten minutes of viewing-time. (The relationship between plot-time and viewing-time in the cinema is too complicated to go into here; one could easily *expect* them to be the same, but because of editing conventions, they almost never are. In other words, there is a further level of adjustment to add to Schlovsky's two categories of 'story' and 'plot' before we can accurately talk about what the viewer actually perceives. The problem does not arise in literary narrative, because no one would dream of expecting plot-time and 'reading-time' to coincide, whereas in the theatre, one would expect them to *have to* coincide. In the cinema, if a man gets up out of a chair and starts towards a door, whereupon a cut takes us to him closing behind him the door we 'know' he has just gone through, it is hard to say that 'plot-time' has elided 'story-time,' and that we have not been 'shown' him going through the door.)

In order of total (accumulated) duration there are three groupings of

Table 1 The plot of *Roma città aperta* (*primo tempo*)

Scene* nos.	Thread	Duration**	Number of each thread-section and description	Event-story references
2–9	*Manfredi*	3.3	1. SS raid on Manfredi's apartment	2bi, 5bi, 6bi
10	*Bergmann*	2.5	2. Bergmann with Questore; photos of Manfredi and Marina	2bi, 5bi, 5bii, 2a, 6a
11–18	*Pina*	6.0	3. Assault on bakery; Brigadiere; black marketeer; lets Manfredi into Francesco's; calls Marcello to get Don Pietro; Lauretta; talks to Manfredi	3bi, 3a, 2a, 2bii, 2biii, 4bi, 1a, 6a, 6bii
19–21	*Don Pietro / Romoletto*	2.6	4. Football; Don Pietro summoned by Marcello; conversation with the boy; Agostino and the bread	1bi, 4bii, 3bi
22	*Pina*	1.1	5. Pina tells Manfredi about herself	3a
23	*Manfredi / Don Pietro*	0.2	6. Manfredi meets Don Pietro in Francesco's apartment	2biv, 1bii, 1a
23–4	*Pina / Romoletto*	0.4	7. Pina catches Marcello eavesdropping; Marcello goes to Romoletto to tell him something important	3bii, 4biv
25	*Manfredi / Don Pietro*	0.8	8. Manfredi asks Don Pietro to collect and deliver the money to the partisans	2biv, 1bii
26–9	*Don Pietro*	3.4	9. Don Pietro collects the money from the printing shop	1biii, 7bi, 2biv, 5biv
30	*Marina*	3.7	10. Marina in nightclub needing drugs; getting news of Manfredi from Lauretta; meeting Ingrid	6bii, 2biii, 5biii
31–6	*Pina / Don Pietro*	6.2	11. Pina waits for Don Pietro in the rectory; the books with money in them; the Austrian deserter; culpability for the war	3biii, 3a, 1biv, 1biii
37	*Don Pietro*	0.5	12. Hands over the money to partisan	1biv, 1bii, 1biii, 2biv
38–9	*Miscellaneous*	1.3	13. Francesco is stopped by Fascist soldiers on the way home; he sees Lauretta returning	7bi, 1biii, 6a
40–1	*Manfredi / Pina*	1.8	14. Francesco returns home to find Manfredi; Pina comes in looking for Marcello; the explosion at the rail depot	2bv, 2a, 3a, 3bv, 1biii, 5biv, 4bv

Table 1 (*continued*)

Scene* nos.	Thread	Duration**	Number of each thread-section and description	Event-story references
42–5	*Romoletto*	1.5	15. The boys return from their sabotage mission, and fear for their families' reception	4bv, 4bvi, 5biv, 3bvi
46–7	*Pina / Romoletto*	3.2	16. Pina scolds the boys; Lauretta quarrels with Otello's parents; Marcello tells Andreina that girls cannot fight; Francesco respects Marcello's secret; Marcello expresses love for Francesco	3bvi, 4bvi, 4c
48	*Pina*	2.8	17. Dialogue with Francesco on the landing	3bvii, 2a, 3a
49–50	*Marina*	0.6	18. Marina telephones Manfredi's lodgings	6biii, 2bii, 2bi
51–4	*Bergmann*	2.7	19. Bergmann looks at the clandestine newspapers; the Questore shows him Manfredi's dossier	5biv, 2a, 6a
55	*Don Pietro*	0.4	20. Don Pietro lets the children in for catechism	1bv, 4bvii
56–7	*Pina*	0.3	21. The Brigadiere congratulates Francesco	3a, 3bii, 3bviii
58–9	*Pina / Manfredi*	0.6	22. Pina warns the men about the Germans surrounding the building; they look down at the street	3bviii, 5bv
60–1	*Bergmann*	1.1	23. The Germans surround the building and bring out the inhabitants	5bv
62–3	*Don Pietro / Romoletto*	0.5	24. Andreina arrives at the church to summon Marcello	1bvi, 4bviii
64	*Bergmann*	0.3	25. The SS empty the building	5bv
65	*Manfredi*	0.2	26. Francesco and Manfredi escape	2bix
66	*Bergmann*	0.1	27. The SS line up the inhabitants in the courtyard	5bv
67–8	*Manfredi*	0.2	28. Francesco and Manfredi escape	2bix
69	*Bergmann*	0.3	29. Fascist soldiers look at the women's legs in the laundry room	5bv
70–2	*Pina*	0.7	30. Pina with the others in the courtyard	3bix

73	*Don Pietro*	0.7	31. Don Pietro and Marcello arrive with the sacraments, and start up the stairs	1bvii, 5bv, 4bix
74–5	*Don Pietro / Romoletto*	0.9	32. They reach Romoletto's attic and take the weapons from him	1bvii, 4bix
76	*Bergmann*	0.3	33. The Fascist officer starts up the stairs to check out Don Pietro	1bvii, 4bix, 5bv
77 parallel montage	*Don Pietro / Romoletto / Bergmann*	0.4	34. Don Pietro and Marcello come down the stairs, the Fascists climb up	1bviii, 4bx, 5bv
78	*Don Pietro / Romoletto*	1.2	35. Don Pietro and Marcello enter Pina's apartment, hide the weapons, and sit by the grandfather, who wakes up and protests	1bix, 4bxi, 5bv
79–80	*Bergmann / Don Pietro / Romoletto*	0.8	36. The Fascist soldiers enter Pina's apartment and start searching it; they enter the grandfather's room and see him moribund, receiving the last rites	5bv, 1bx, 4bxi
81	*Don Pietro / Romoletto*	0.5	37. Don Pietro and Marcello comment on the frying pan episode	1bx, 4bxii
82–5	*Pina*	1.0	38. Pina sees Francesco captured, and runs after him; she is gunned down; Marcello, Don Pietro, and the Brigadiere rush to her body	3bix, 1bxi, 1bxii, 1bxiii, (2bix), 4bxiii, 4bxiv, 4bxv, 5bv, (6b)

* Here, a scene is what would in a script be a 'scene': a sequence of shots taken in one location and one story-time. However, where there has been a to-and-fro (for example, in a telephone conversation), I have arbitrarily called it two 'scenes.' Number of scenes: 85 (add one scene for the attack on the convoy, and you have the number of scenes in the *primo tempo* of the film). Average scene duration: 39 seconds.

** Duration in minutes and tenths of minutes of following the *thread* (which may be made up of more than one scene). Average duration in minutes and tenths of minutes of following one *thread* before picking up another: 1.5. Number of *thread-sections*: 38. Roughly 2 scenes per *thread-section*.

– Approximate duration of the film up to the death of Pina: 55 minutes.

– *Main threads* in descending order of total duration (in minutes and tenths): *Don Pietro* 19.1, *Pina* 17.9, *Romoletto* 9.4, *Bergmann* 8.5, *Manfredi* 7.1, *Marina* 4.3.

thread-sections: (1) *Don Pietro* and *Pina*, (2) *Romoletto*, *Bergmann*, and *Manfredi*, (3) *Marina*, with each grouping getting twice as much time as the grouping that follows, so that twice as much time is devoted to the *Don Pietro* and *Pina* threads, for example, as to the other four threads. The picture would be different, of course, if we calculated the total duration of threads for the whole film (including what follows Pina's death). *Manfredi* and *Bergmann* would start to catch up with *Don Pietro*. However, given that the film breaks into two at the death of Pina, the first self-contained half greatly privileges the melodramatic genre surrounding *Don Pietro* and *Pina* over the Resistance hero-adventure genre surrounding *Manfredi* and *Bergmann* (though, as we shall see, *Don Pietro* is very much concerned with the Resistance theme). This is even more marked if we bear in mind that the *Romoletto* thread is tied to *Pina* and to *Don Pietro* by Marcello (and appears in the 'Event-story references' column for nearly half of all the thread-sections). Moreover, the *Romoletto* and *Manfredi* Resistance threads are also linked to the rest of the film by *Don Pietro*, while *Manfredi*, partly through Francesco, creates the link with *Pina*. Nevertheless, the assault on the bakery and the whole story of Lauretta are only anchored in the plot by *Pina*. To a certain extent, Pina the character, and hence the thread *Pina*, are superfluous to the film *as a whole* (i.e., to both halves put together), and are only justified by the *historical* fact of the death of Maria Teresa Gullace, which, at the level of chronicle, caught the imagination of the people of Rome as emblematic of 'family' crushed under the cruel and indifferent jackboot of the German occupation (it was so reported in the newspapers of the time). Her death occasioned a demonstration and partisan attack later the same day in which an innocent bystander, a woman coming out of the church of San Gioacchino, was killed by a stray bullet. Gullace's death historically *provoked* armed Resistance activity (none of which is alluded to in the film, unless we see the attack on the convoy as being analogous), but in itself was a chance by-product of the Occupation. The film's plot, however, makes this thread the climax and dénouement of the first half, which thereby becomes a self-contained plot, a 'film' of its own. Not only that, the scene of Pina's death becomes one of the most celebrated sequences in the whole of the history of the cinema.

The *Don Pietro* thread in the first half of the film, based on the Resistance activity of Don Morosini and Don Pappagallo, contains three 'Resistance activities': giving the money to the partisans, arranging the escape of the Austrian deserter, and rescuing Romoletto's weapons, but

these activities are intimately interwoven with *Pina* (the books and the Austrian with Pina's confession, the weapons with the 'grandfather'). Don Pietro 'acts' in the Resistance because three people ask for his help: Manfredi, the Austrian deserter, and Marcello. The *Manfredi* thread is mainly filled by Manfredi's relationship with Marina and by his hiding from the Germans. It is only when he leads the attack on the convoy that he carries out any 'Resistance activity.' This attack, extremely significant in historical terms, is understated in the narrative rhetoric of the film.

The attack on the convoy is treated almost elliptically, from a cinematic point of view. It is made up of a few shots, mostly in very long scale, that sometimes make it difficult for the editor to reconcile the angles of viewpoint. An analogous assault on a German patrol in Via Rasella led to the reprisal of the Ardeatine massacre, in which ten Italians were executed for each German killed. Manfredi's attack on the convoy would be reminiscent of the Via Rasella ambush, and could evoke the same controversy over whether such exploits justified the terrible price paid for them. Manfredi's attack more closely resembled that of Via Rasella in the script than it does in the film, where it passes as an action primarily directed towards freeing the prisoners held by the Germans. By having this attack in the film, the filmmakers appear to endorse and even celebrate the partisan action in Via Rasella. Its elliptical treatment may be an attempt to avoid too much controversy, and to weave the historical event into the film's narrative threads.

If, therefore, we see *Roma città aperta* as breaking into two 'films,' the first combines the 'Resistance activity' of a priest with the melodrama of an innocent pregnant mother's death, while the second transfers the 'Resistance activity' role to Manfredi (besides the attack on the convoy he stops the Germans arresting more partisans by dying under torture without revealing information) and the domestic 'melodrama' role to Don Pietro, who embodies compassion and sanctity (as opposed to Resistance defiance), and dies innocent (he is not explicitly accused of any 'Resistance activity'). He is not really interrogated by Bergmann, but rather is 'tortured' by being forced to watch Manfredi's torture. However, this is used by the narrative's dramatic machinery for manipulating the emotions of the viewer, rather than as the equivalent of the military tribunal to which Don Morosini was subjected. In other words, in the second 'film' Manfredi becomes what Don Pietro had been, and Don Pietro what Pina had been, in the first 'film.' Thus, the first 'film' is

repeated to a certain extent by the second. In the first, Pina's (domestic) values are immune to the Occupation, while in the second Don Pietro's values are immune to the Gestapo. It is, of course, an exaggeration, but there is a grain of truth in the suspicion that the 'Resistance' functions almost as a pretext for a moral melodrama. There is nothing remarkable about *Roma città aperta* in this regard, because it is a feature of most Resistance narratives (particularly cinematic) of the immediate post-war period in most countries. In Italy, for example, a *political* perspective on the Resistance only began to feature widely in the cinema in the 1960s.

We have observed earlier how the melodramatic matrix characteristically sets up a narrative that moves in repetitive circles, cyclically repeating itself in order to 'illustrate' a situation, a condition, or an experience (whereas a hero-adventure narrative generally moves from one situation to a 'changed' new one). In *Roma città aperta* the narrative has repeated 'movements' (we earlier called them two 'films' and a 'coda'), in each of which a civilian (denoted by his or her costume) dies at the hands of, and in a situation dominated by, 'uniformed' (once again, costume does the work) soldiers. In order to make its 'reference' to the Occupation and the Resistance, *Roma città aperta* narrates a melodrama of human suffering brought about by the irruption of transgressive chaotic elements (war, in this case, as in so many) into an idyll (connoted by the 'humanity' of Pina and Don Pietro and their roles in the 'organic' Prenestina community).

In the first half of the film Pina offers the viewer a point of view (ethical and emotional) and in the second half Don Pietro serves this purpose. As I have already said, *Roma città aperta* is not like *To Have and Have Not*, with the protagonist always present, serving as a continuity of consciousness; the Italian film cross-cuts between separate threads not linked by the on-screen presence of a continuous consciousness. *Roma città aperta* therefore has to create the effect of a point of view for the viewer and supply a linking consciousness, and then shift it from one character to another mid-way through the film.

If Pina is to a certain extent superfluous to the 'main' narrative of the whole film, Don Pietro is, in a similar way, superfluous to the film's second half. However, each functions as a consciousness that is characterized by being innocent and a victim (Don Pietro is not innocent in actual fact, but various means are used to project him in this light). From this perspective, it starts to become clear how the film has functioned historically in the social narrativizing of the Second World War.

Pina and Don Pietro establish a point of view for the viewer: they are innocent victims, rather than involved combatants – their 'resistance' is on the human, compassionate level. The point of view constructed by the film defines the viewer's vision of himself or herself as *innocent victim* (and is reinforced by the viewer's identification with Don Pietro's point of view on the torture of Manfredi). At the film's showing at the Rome Festival (24 September 1945), a fairly elite audience felt the emotional impact of the film, but was dubious about its message, and about the film's roughness. In some ways, this is an entirely appropriate response to the film: to see it precisely for what it is.

Rapidly the point of view on the war carried by Pina and Don Pietro became a cult expression of how Italians needed to narrativize the war, and its 'truth' or acceptability was reinforced by foreign responses to the film. Even the elite gradually began to accept it as the 'story' of the Resistance. However, critics could not help finding the film's adoption as 'realist' a little unconvincing. Hence, the myth of the film coexists with perplexity about that myth.

The same generic (melodramatic) narrative is rehearsed with less obviously manipulative means in *Paisà*, and bears the same message. This time Rossellini's camera sets up an 'objective,' ironic point of view, rather than offering a particular character as a 'position' for the viewer. The effect is that of a 'reality' *caught* or *discovered* by the camera, rather than one *produced* by a consciousness. This 'effect' is precisely what characterizes the 'realism' of neorealism as it emerges from the interpretations and evaluations of a phenomenological critic like André Bazin. *Paisà* is thus deemed more realist than the earlier film, but in fact it reinforces, retrospectively, the 'truth' of what in *Roma città aperta* was communicated by means of the viewer's identification with a character who was the bearer of a point of view. *Paisà* proves that what *Roma città aperta* narrates is 'true' (real).

Rossellini does the same for Germany in *Germania anno zero* that he had done for Italy in *Paisà* – but without provoking anything like the same response in the Italian public or in Italian criticism, because Italians no longer saw it as acceptably narrativizing their own experience (i.e., it does not articulate their thought about the war, and so does not meet a *need* for narrative). It was necessary for Italians to have their experience narrativized as that of innocent victims. For Rossellini to do that for the Germans was (a) going too far in contradicting other narratives, which portrayed the Italians as the innocent victims of the Ger-

mans, and (b) of no particular interest to Italians anyway (those small touches of 'humanity' Rossellini gives to Germans in *Roma città aperta* and *Paisà* have gone entirely unremarked in Italian writing about the films – with the exception of Indro Montanelli's contemporary review).[25] *Roma città aperta* and *Paisà* were box-office successes, while *Germania anno zero* was a flop; critics began to find Rossellini becoming 'involuted.'

The plot of *Roma città aperta* moves rapidly and economically, and the viewer does not receive the impression that he or she is just watching talking heads involved in dialogue, even though our analysis of the film's event-story content shows the enormous amount of information conveyed in a short time. However, if we used the classical distinction between *mimesis* (what we are shown taking place) and *diegesis* (what we are told about – though this is not the way the word is currently used in film theory), we would immediately notice how much the plot relies on *diegesis*. For example, the relationship between Manfredi and Marina is pivotal to the action of the plot, and conventional mainstream cinema would probably have exploited that romantic and erotic material in the *mimesis*. Instead, the first half of *Roma città aperta* consigns it to brief mentions in the *diegesis*. Apart from the attack on the rail depot by Romoletto's band (even here, the actual attack itself is 'elided'), and the handing over of money to the partisan, 'Resistance activity' receives little *mimesis*. Indeed, to follow the plot properly, the viewer needs a large amount of knowledge, which reinforces the persuasiveness of Marina Zancan's and Lucia Re's discussion of the way in which neorealist Resistance narratives built upon already existing, elaborated narratives. Precisely because *Roma città aperta* is formed out of a number of *threads* based on well-known and already narrated 'events,' its blending of them into a single whole creates a three-dimensional plot that *alludes* to much of its own content rather than painstakingly playing it out.

A feature of almost all Resistance cinema is that the real 'war,' with its 'professional' soldiers, takes place off-screen. Indeed, the distinction between 'the military' and 'the civilian' is an important characteristic of Resistance cinema.[26] By this means *Roma città aperta* creates the 'inhumanity' of Bergmann (and it is in contrast with this inhumanity that Hartmann's speech, and his alarm at bringing Marina to see Manfredi's corpse, carry significance). *Paisà* investigates in some depth the very different experiences and mentalities assigned to 'professionals' and 'civilians,' and gradually breaks down the barrier separating them. The profoundest, most significant, and most 'realist' films about 'war' do

not *depict* battle, and this is because of the 'thinking' function of narrative and the choice between the two genres (hero-adventure or melodrama) facing an artist wanting to deal with the subject. 'Thought' has less to do with facts and more to do with structuring a generic narrative: melodrama, a world view that embraces and gives a meaning to experience through *contemplation*. And if, as sometimes occurs, the melodramatic myth involves a transgression precipitating chaos, the meaning of the disturbance of the idyll is often evoked by means of a senseless tragedy that is not really part of the war, but involves somebody who is 'good' being needlessly, and possibly accidentally, killed, followed by the struggle to reassert order, the idyll. Pina's death amply fulfils this requirement. In other words, part of the definition of chaos is meaninglessness and arbitrariness. This is typical of all resistance narrative. The antagonists are the 'idyll' (order) and 'meaninglessness' (disorder), and this goes for German representations of the war too.

If we remember that the function of narrative is explanatory, then it is clear how narrative connotes 'meaninglessness' as negative a priori, as it were. The accelerated montage procedure creates the senseless death of Pina, and motivates it as a product of 'disorder,' making it hurtle down unexpectedly and accidentally: she becomes the figure for the garden of the idyll. The senselessness of Pina's death is also a product of generic contamination, involving comedy and incongruity, producing a modulation of the viewer's state of tension through the device of mixing genres (see the following section on 'Dramaturgy'). Moreover, there is no indication of who shot Pina, no writhing and dying in pain, nor any blood. Her death is completed with an allusion to the Christian iconography of the Deposition from the Cross and later, at Benediction, to the recital of the 'Litany of the Blessed Virgin.' Pina represents the idyll abruptly snuffed out.

- The second half of the film moves a little in the direction of the hero-adventure matrix, and is the section less remembered and celebrated, even though it may well be factually very accurate. Manfredi versus Bergmann is the mainstream antagonism of the war that normally runs off-camera. They are antagonists in the struggle over what Don Pietro signifies – he is the melodramatic element, the link with the first half of the film – the senseless destruction of the garden. Pina and Don Pietro are the film's real protagonists (note how they statistically dominate the first half), even though the subject-matter of the film is Manfredi versus Bergmann.

The Manfredi and Bergmann threads raise more political issues in the film than most people notice:

- Class: Manfredi's relationship with Marina would have been better if he had met her 'in those days' – when she was true to her social origins; betraying them has a metaphorical relationship with the betrayal of Manfredi, and hence of the democratic Resistance.
- The political background to the war is referred to when Bergmann and the Questore discuss Manfredi's activism against Fascism back in the 1920s, which briefly shines a light on the Fascist police state.
- Bergmann's contemptuous treatment of the Questore of Rome brings the story of Fascism up to date.
- Bergmann's taunts and arguments concerning the inherent incompatibility between the left-wing and the right-wing elements of the Resistance allude to its more problematic areas and those of the post-war reconstruction.
- Bergmann's comment that searching Don Pietro's rectory was a mistake alludes to the position of the Vatican and of the Catholic Church in the context of its Concordat with the Fascist state.
- Manfredi's questioning of Pina about how the women are coping with conditions, and her recounting to him of how the Germans have requisitioned her engineering factory's means of production allude to the working-class struggle for economic survival that constituted a large element of the Resistance.

However, a list of political observations carried by the film does not change its basic narrative matrix. It is the film's narrative that characterizes it, rather than a collection of details occurring in individual dialogues. At most, this list demonstrates that Amidei and Rossellini are by no means as politically naive and rooted in the generic as the 'popular' narrative they are assembling. Nevertheless, if you give importance to these elements, the film comes closer to the standard ideological definition of realism (as 'analysis').

These details apart, the politics of *Roma città aperta* are more those of narrative than what is normally thought of as a politics of realist representation. If we were discussing political parties and their programs, this argument would be considered perfectly normal and acceptable. But to suggest that a *cultural* monument like *Roma città aperta* is in an *iconic* relationship with the referent of the Resistance, and in an *indexical* relationship with the referent of the post-war reconstruction (rather

than the other way round), challenges the very basis of much Italian reception of the film. It suggests that the film does not so much 'indexically' represent the Resistance as function as a direct symptom of what Italians *needed* from the Resistance after it was over. It requires that we pay at least as much attention to the film's narrativizing function (and hence to the 'downwards' direction of its reference) as to its representational function (the 'upwards' direction of its reference to historical events). While this suggested perspective may seem to be a criticism of the film's 'realism,' it draws attention to the craft of the narrators, and to the aesthetic status of the artefact as an object, which is something that theories of realism tend to neglect. The film's impact is the same for those who experienced the Second World War as for those who know next to nothing about it. Is this because of the 'accuracy' of the subject matter, or because of the aesthetic qualities of the artefact?

Dramaturgy: Analysis of the Episode of the Shooting of Pina

1. *Ingredients*

The historical basis for the episode of Pina's death lies in the death of Maria Teresa Gullace:

> In the morning, in front of the barracks of the 81st infantry in Via Giulio Cesare, mothers, wives, and daughters of men who had been rounded up by the Germans are loudly demanding the release of their dear ones, who have been locked up there prior to being deported ... A young prisoner tries to escape through an opening on the first floor. He is killed with a burst of machine-gun fire. Teresa Gullace, the mother of five children and six months pregnant, is trying to throw a package with a piece of bread and cheese in it to her husband whom she spies at a window. She tries to push through, and is killed by a German NCO.
>
> In the afternoon, two bands of G.A.P. partisan guerrillas respond to the killing of Teresa Gullace with an attack on the garrison of the same barracks. In the firefight an officer of the fascist militia gets killed. A woman also dies, hit by a stray bullet as she was coming out of the church of San Gioacchino.[27]

Before *Roma città aperta* was conceived, Giuseppe De Santis, together with a group of writers from the journal *Cinema* and members of the Roman Resistance, had included this episode in his script for a film on

the Resistance called *G.A.P.* (the Gruppi di Azione Patriottica were the urban guerrilla partisan formations). Antonio Parisi, in his monograph on the director's work, recounts a conversation in which De Santis told him:

> One of the things that most appealed to us as a way of celebrating the work of those comrades who were daily risking their lives in the G.A.P. squads was to write a film treatment having them as protagonists. It was the first film to be conceived about the resistance, even before *Roma città aperta*. I would say that Rossellini's film copied it, I do not know whether deliberately or by chance, because an episode in the Roman Resistance featured the woman, like Magnani, killed by the Germans, which actually took place in Viale Giulio Cesare outside the barracks of the 81st infantry, and it was one of the most important episodes in the script for *G.A.P.*[28]

Rossellini had come close to the *Cinema* group during the making of his own 1942 film *Un pilota ritorna*. De Santis and others of the group had then collaborated on a film that Rossellini started making in July 1943, a melodrama set in the San Lorenzo railway yards just beside Via Montecuccoli (Pina's home in *Roma città aperta*), called *Scalo merci*. De Santis was both scriptwriter and Rossellini's assistant director on the film. Soon after they had started shooting, the Allies heavily bombed the railway yards, and Rossellini moved the troupe to Tagliacozzo in the Abruzzi hills (where Manfredi will be charged with sending money in *Roma città aperta*) and changed the script to set it among foresters, while De Santis stayed on in Rome. In the cast were Francesco Grandjacquet (who will play Francesco in *Roma città aperta*) and Roswitha Schmidt (who will dub Ingrid). The production ran out of money, was abandoned, and was taken up and completed in 1945 by Marcello Pagliero (who plays Manfredi in *Roma città aperta*), with a new title, *Desiderio*, and released in 1946. The finished film has a first part made by Rossellini, and the rest by Pagliero. Carlo Lizzani, a member of the group of younger artists and writers (who will later be Rossellini's assistant on *Germania anno zero*) recalls:

> At the time of the resistance to the dictatorship, conversation, dialogue, and personal contacts provided great terrain for debate, a formative network of which almost nothing remains for successive generations. In our case it is a patrimony that has never been committed to written documents, but that counted enormously for Rossellini, just as for De Sica and

Visconti. I remember that those of us who were the younger ones placed a lot of faith in this cultural guerrilla war conducted through private dialogue and debate. The evenings passed chatting at the editorial offices of *Cinema*, the fraternizing on the set of *Scalo merci* ..., I think these things gave that director a decisive push.[29]

Much discussion has taken place over Rossellini's transformation from a maker of the regime's patriotic films (*La nave bianca* with Francesco De Robertis, *Un pilota ritorna* with Vittorio Mussolini, and *L'uomo dalla croce*) to anti-fascist 'resistance' films like *Roma città aperta* and *Paisà*. The issues involved are beyond the scope of this book. Nevertheless, it should be clear how the movement took place and, more importantly for our purposes, how *Roma città aperta* itself grew out of the contacts Rossellini's work brought him with the younger generation of partisans and film theorists, the melodrama of *Scalo merci* acting as a halfway house. All along, Rossellini wanted the freedom to make films his own way, something that government productions allowed far more than commercial ones, and it was a freedom he never thereafter renounced. De Santis had started out with the formal, traditional, literary Visconti on *Ossessione*, and as a *Cinema* critic admiring the literary, formal filming of the French tradition. His collaboration with Rossellini, whose approach to cinema was closer to the freer, less formal, documentary approach of De Robertis, earned De Santis the wrath of Visconti, a director very different from Rossellini. In the genesis of the episode of Pina's death we are watching the development of more than just the neorealism of Rossellini.

Tag Gallagher makes an interesting observation concerning Pina's pursuit of the truck: 'Roberto surely recalled a similar scene in King Vidor's 1925 *The Big Parade* – one of the most famous scenes in movies – where Renée Adorée chases the truck taking John Gilbert away.'[30] Vidor was one of the directors championed by the *Cinema* group in the early 1940s; his *The Big Parade* and *The Crowd* were paradigmatic examples of 'realism' in the cinema. Rossellini himself admired Vidor. In *The Big Parade* Jim, part of the American contingent arriving in France to fight against the Germans in the First World War, is billeted in a farm where he falls in love with the owners' daughter, Mélisande, and she with him. Jim's battalion is suddenly ordered to move up to the front, and Mélisande sees all the soldiers hurrying onto trucks to be transported away. She looks in vain for Jim among the masses of men, and finally the two

catch sight of each other, Jim aboard a truck that is about to move off. Mélisande runs to the truck, pulls Jim down, and tries to stop him from leaving, but an NCO tears them apart and good-naturedly bundles Jim back onto the truck, which starts trundling off down the road. Mélisande clutches Jim's hand, then a strap hanging from the truck, and is dragged along until she lets go. The scene closes with her standing alone in the road, looking after the departed battalion, and finally sinking, sobbing, to the ground.

The girl trying to hold back her lover from going off to be killed at the front is a commonplace of war narratives, and forms part of the 'back at home' melodramatic motif that endows stories of battle and bravery with poignancy. To call it a cliché belittles the profundity and authenticity of the theme, but if Pina's death were a variation on that theme, it might not deserve to be called as innovative and historically meaningful as it has frequently been described. Certainly, one sometimes gets the impression that the 'institution of neorealism' wilfully forgets that other good films had ever had anything profound or ethical to say about war before 1945, least of all American ones. If Pina's pursuit of the truck carrying away Francesco were 'intertextually' linked to Mélisande's pursuit of Jim's truck, the implications could be deemed profound. Even assuming Amidei's original idea was inspired by seeing Anna Magnani run after Massimo Serato (Magnani's biography does not confirm the story, but then it might not be the kind of story she would pass on to a biographer), then Rossellini's acceptance of Amidei's suggestion, and his decision to move the episode from Viale Giulio Cesare (in the Prati district of Rome, very different from the railway district) to Via Montecuccoli might have been partly motivated by his recollection of *The Big Parade*, its thematic connotations, and the enormous audience response it evoked. Rather than being a component of the rejection of convention in neorealist cinema, it would constitute the exploitation of a conventional narrative motif of melodrama.

However, to see ourselves faced with such an interpretive choice would perhaps mean embracing precisely the kind of evaluative criterion concerning *Roma città aperta* that has hitherto obstructed analysis of the film. It is characteristic of Gallagher's iconoclastic appreciation of Rossellini's art that he makes his observation with no further comment. We could certainly decide that the artist finds his material wherever he can, and that what matters is the use he makes of it. Rossellini could be seen as 'transforming' rather than 'exploiting' the American motif. Magnani is no Renée Adorée, no 'ingénue,' no fiancée holding her lover

back from fighting. Her fury belongs in another register. If Vidor's film lies somewhere behind Pina's pursuit of the truck, then Rossellini and Magnani made very good use of that material.

The scene of Pina's death grew in conception during the actual shooting of the film. From being one short story among many, it became woven into a single long story made up of numerous threads. It was a late decision to have it take place in Via Montecuccoli, rather than in another part of the city. All the threads come together in her death, and some threads end with that event. We only fleetingly return to the community of the Prenestina (in Manfredi's arrest at Don Pietro's rectory); Romoletto and his band drop out of the film, only to return at the very end. It was a complex and expensive scene to shoot, because it required a large number of extras, uniforms, and vehicles, all of which had to be managed and coordinated.

It has been said that it was shot with three cameras. While being costly in film stock, this would have been economical in time and organization, and permitted the makers to remedy mistakes at the editing stage, as we shall see.

A parenthetical note may help some viewers to grasp the scene more clearly, because the topography of the apartment block on Via Montecuccoli may not be clear to all. On the building's frontage to the street is a tall entrance, with double doors that are left open during the day (in a night-time scene, we see Francesco and then Lauretta come through these doors, which are closed for the night). The doorway leads to a large passage, which goes right through the building to a courtyard inside, surrounded on all sides by the wings of the apartment building. From the middle of that passage lead off large spiral staircases, laterally going into the wings of the front section of the building, the one on the right (looking from the street) being where Francesco has his apartment, overlooking the street. At the back of the same front wing of the building, with windows onto the courtyard this time, is the apartment where Pina lives. The entrances to those two apartments face each other across a landing on the spiral staircase, beyond which the two apartments have adjoining walls (which explains how, two years beforehand, Pina and Francesco had got to know each other as the result of an argument about banging on the adjoining wall: their love grew from a quarrel between neighbours).

This all could have been made much clearer to the viewer than it actually is with careful continuity and choice of camera angles, both

inside and outside the building, and it is typical of the film (and perhaps of Rossellini's directorial style) that such care has not been taken. This might seem mere pedantry on my, the critic's, part. However, a cinema screen is essentially two-dimensional, and left and right are the most important orienting factors for the viewer. A scrupulous *narrative* film director will either include 'establishing shots' in his montage, to orient the viewer topographically, or he will avoid the need for this by one of two methods: either by choosing his angles so as to preserve a coherent point of view or by developing his scenes in long takes in which characters move around the location. Rossellini does neither of these things. Let me quote from a conversation held much later between an interviewer and Jolanda Benvenuti, who edited the film (Jolanda rarely completes a sentence, and it can be hard to render her nuanced syntax in English):

Did you pay attention to how the preceding shot ended, so that ...?
No, but don't you see how each scene is on its own? Look at them closely, it's not as though there are cuts from angle to angle ... [*she means:* it is not as though the camera angle for one shot has been chosen to match that of the shots that were to precede and follow it]. We would [*meaning:* the shot would] stop where the dialogue ends.
How many takes did he make for each scene?
Very few. We'd use everything [*meaning:* all the footage we shot]. There wasn't the film [*meaning:* there was not enough raw film stock for multiple takes]. That's the way the film was shot. No clapperboard. He would tell me: 'Do it this way.' I would ask: 'Why?' He would say: 'Can't you see?' Me: 'What d'you mean, can't I see? I don't know!' We were always arguing like that.
If a scene was complicated, how many takes would you make of it, maximum?
Oh, no, he didn't find them complicated; if it was a long scene he would shoot it all, and then do little pieces. He would do one master shot, and then lots of pieces.
...
When Rossellini wasn't there I did the shooting. The final scene with the children, that one I shot. Then I did another one. But more or less, they were scenes with no dialogue.
Was there direct sound?
It was shot silent, and then dubbed.
...
So if a sequence shot had a mistake, it was a mess? You only had one take?

If it was a long shot, I just left it alone.
How did you edit the scene of Pina's shooting?
Oh, we spent a month, just on the machine-gun. I had one bang, and I just multiplied it frame by frame. We worked with nothing.
Who was the sound-effects man?
Me.
You did the machine-gun burst?
Sure, I did lots of them.
...
I'd wonder how we were going to put these pieces together, really. Because, the way it was shot, I didn't see how to edit them. I'd be incensed. I'd say 'This is impossible.'
Did you do all the editing yourself?
Yes. Eraldo [Da Roma], who should have done it, was in jail, something to do with the Germans [she makes some gestures, indicating that we would know what she was talking about]. And I always used to edit for him [Rossellini]. I liked it.
And when somebody [she means Rossellini] is fixated [about/on something], and the scene has been shot out of sequence, I just didn't understand.
Did Rossellini come when you were editing?
Rossellini would say 'This evening we'll see it [*meaning:* we'll see what you – Jolanda – have managed to put together]; if it's not right, we'll do it over again.' Then he'd see the scene [*meaning:* the montage I had put together], and say [her gestures imply that he was not satisfied] 'We'll shoot another scene.' Rossellini was never there, it drove me crazy. Rossellini would say 'Try whatever you like.'
Often I wouldn't even have a copy of the script. It had disappeared, nobody knew where it was.
What were the practical problems in the editing?
He shot as the whim took him and I needed to match the shots. Then he'd say 'Damn it,' and I: 'What do you expect?'
Rossellini would improvise, he would shoot when he felt like it. He would come and say 'Here's some footage.'[31]

The Germans round up the inhabitants in the courtyard (where Pina slaps the flirtatious soldier), and take the men out through the passage into the street. Pina sees Francesco being led through the passage, and gives pursuit, fighting her way through the Germans, who try to stop her. Once she has reached the doorway on the street, she sees the truck

carrying Francesco drive off, and chases it. Don Pietro and Marcello, meanwhile, have come down into the large passage from the staircase, and have started to leave the premises through the front door on the street, and hence witness the shooting (which those in the courtyard cannot see).

There are a number of 'mistakes' in the filming of the actual shooting:

(a) Pina looks at the truck and sees Francesco; she struggles with the Germans at the doorway on the street; she looks again, and Francesco calls out to her; but the truck, which was already in movement, has not got any further away.

(b) Pina's run after the truck is too short, because she falls too quickly; it does not provide enough footage to create the required effect. The filmmakers solved this by inserting, into the shot taken from the truck of her running after it, a shot taken from across the street in front of the doorway of that same chase. Basically, the same action is run twice, from different angles.

(c) In the shot from the back of the truck, Pina is too far away for the viewer to see her eyes. But in the shot from across the street, Anna Magnani can clearly be seen to look down at the ground to check that she is not going to stumble over a rut in the road. If the viewer were to perceive this, it would greatly detract from the impression of passionate instinct propelling her pursuit.

(d) Marcello rushes over to his mother's fallen body, followed by Don Pietro, who has a black cloak fully covering his white surplice. In the transition from one shot to another, the cloak disappears.

(e) The position in which Pina's body lies in the roadway changes from shot to shot.

From our perspective, studying the film, these details provide insight into the roughness of the film and of Rossellini's way of shooting: there are a lot of mistakes in 22 seconds of film. Yet Rossellini tolerated them. However, they equally indicate the dramatic and aesthetic power lying behind the *assembly* of the scene, and behind the whole technique of parallel montage storytelling that leads up to it, for that cinematographically 'flawed' sequence is one of the most admired and celebrated in the whole of European cinema.

This sequence contributes to the 'myth' of neorealism as a heroic cinema, overcoming insuperable technical obstacles and deriving all its impact from the 'truth' of the representation: a cinema of 'content' rather than of 'form.' That myth belongs in the realm of reception

and interpretation, but under the close examination of 'description' becomes decidedly questionable.

2. *Genre*

Part of the effect of the scene is its suddenness and unexpectedness, a result in part of the mixture of genres interwoven throughout the whole episode. Not only does the scene weave together *narrative* threads, it also makes a single whole from diverse *generic* patterns. The viewer's being slightly bewildered and disoriented contributes to the ultimate effect. Up to this point, the character of Pina has furnished the main unifying point of view for the viewer on the multiple strands of the narrative between which the film intercuts. Her death constitutes a 'loss' to the viewer in relation to his or her viewing experience, and thereby gains in rhetorical impact. More importantly, perhaps, the juxtaposition of generic patterns is directed to a powerful rhetorical *pathos* through the manipulation of the viewer's emotional responses.

The episode as a whole deploys the genre of melodrama in the casual and meaningless death of a pregnant woman on her wedding day, the result of a transgression on the part of Manfredi's slighted lover, Marina (though this rather depends on how the viewer understands the logic of the narrative leading up to the episode). It also deploys the melodramatic theme of 'non-organic' trespassing into the intimate territory of the 'organic' community (reinforced by the women's concern for each other's family members).

Adventure and suspense give form to the partisan's flight from the SS, and to Don Pietro's intervention to prevent the discovery of the weapons held by Romoletto in the attic. Most of all, Rossellini uses the stereotyped cinematic convention of suspenseful parallel montage by cutting between Don Pietro descending the stairs and the Fascist militia climbing up them, and then releasing the tension with comedy.

The largest generic ingredient in the episode is supplied by comedy:

- the Brigadiere arriving with flowers for the bride;
- Pina slapping the amorous SS trooper and dislodging his helmet, playing with the rhetorical coding of costume;
- the women telling the Fascist NCO that they trust him to take care of their belongings;
- the Fascist militiamen looking up the skirts of the women instead of in the direction in which the partisans are escaping;

- Don Pietro's arrival 'in disguise,' as a priest come to deliver the Last Sacraments to a dying man;
- the Brigadiere commenting on how times have changed since the days in which priests would arrive with the promptness of the fire brigade;
- the broad Tuscan accent of the Fascist NCO telling the Brigadiere that he does not like his face (this 'encodes' the NCO as 'different' from the Roman populace, and draws once again on the rhetorical coding of costume, as well as exploiting regional stereotypes according to which Tuscans are both sarcastic and rude and had the reputation of being the fiercest and hardest of the Fascists);
- the slapstick choreography of Don Pietro with the mortar bomb and the barrel of the machine gun;
- the comic dramatic irony of the grandfather's protest against death;
- the clever sound-off slapstick of the blow with the frying pan, followed by Don Pietro's frantic attempts to revive the grandfather;
- the comic bewilderment of the Fascist NCO overawed by Don Pietro's pantomime.

Just as the film as a whole is 'repetitive,' in the sense I have described in the section on narrative (a similar story 'told twice'), so this first half of the film has cyclical features to it. The generic contamination in a narrative context of 'suspense,' which we have just encountered in the episode of the shooting of Pina, is itself a repetition of an earlier scene, that in which Pina goes to Don Pietro's rectory to make her confession on the evening before her marriage (in table 1 it is 'thread' number 11, scenes 31–6). The comic role here, corresponding to that of the Brigadiere, is played by the sacristan Agostino (performed by an ubiquitous character actor of Italian film comedy, Nando Bruno), who this time is sarcastic towards Don Pietro and downright snide towards Pina. The element of comic disguise for a serious purpose is constituted by the 'books' containing money for the partisans. Pina's feminine and instinctive – but rash – humanity lies in her insistence on carrying the books for Don Pietro, and the suspenseful threat comes from the appearance of the Austrian deserter. In its formal, generic, and narrative features, this scene is 'repeated' in the killing of Pina. The thematic pattern of 'disguise,' or misrecognition, is soon after taken up by the episode of the spanking of the little boys on their return home from blowing up a German railway petrol wagon ('thread' number 15). This feature of proceeding by means of cyclical, repetitive vignettes belongs to the narrative structure of Italian film comedy, and is a notable char-

acteristic of the first half of *Roma città aperta*, constituting one of the structural devices whereby the filmmakers bring together in a unified assembly the fragmentary and diverse elements of the film's multiple event-stories.

The deliberate intention to create a generic *assembly* is indicated by the decision to add Federico Fellini to the scripting team. The extent to which the episodes deploy the rhetorical resources of *logos* (in their realism), *ethos* (in their melodramatic moral and political referents) is overshadowed by their deployment of *pathos* (the appeal to the viewer's emotions).

3. *Aesthetics*

The artist creates an object that satisfies him (or her). He may not know exactly why it satisfies him, but he accepts that the object configured this way is more satisfactory than when it is configured in some of the other ways he has tried out. Similarly, the viewer is satisfied. Critics have the job of hypothesizing what might account for the satisfaction, usually in terms of the formal properties of the object, what it manages to communicate (its expressiveness), and what it succeeds in representing. A simple example might be the 'superfluous' shot, at the end of the sequence of Pina's shooting, where the camera changes its position on Don Pietro cradling the lifeless body of Pina across his knees, and holds this almost 'still' image for a few seconds (just over five, to be precise). The filmmaker's and the viewer's satisfaction might be accounted for by the critic in terms of the image's formal resemblance to the traditional iconography of Christ's body being received by his mother, Mary, after having been taken down from the Cross. In expressive terms, it could be seen as connoting martyrdom, or Pina sacrificing herself for the Resistance (even though Pina's rash pursuit of the SS in the attempt to retrieve her bridegroom hardly belongs in the realm of a martyr's self-sacrifice). It could be hypothesized that the image represents (or has as its narrative referent) a fertile and innocent Italy persecuted by a sterile and inhuman Nazism – which is a drastic and inaccurate simplification of the real historical context, but one infinitely more palatable than some of the available alternatives. From a purely aesthetic cinematic perspective, we could describe it as the conclusion to a parallel montage procedure bringing about a fortuitous convergence of logical elements on a senseless outcome. Pina and Don Pietro occupy the great bulk of the footage in the rapid inter-cutting of the first half of the film, and it is appropriate that this self-contained

narrative culminate in an almost still image of the two of them together in an emblematic pose.

It is very likely that Rossellini was at most only partially aware at the conscious level of what he was doing when he set up the shot, and that it was at the editing stage that the shot became useful as a rhythmic device to bring this section of the film to a satisfactory close. Continuity errors in the shots at this point in the film suggest that Rossellini had gone back to collect 'coverage' (shots designed to offer flexibility at the editing stage) after having shot the main narrative material. The viewer never has to contemplate the sequence without the shot of Pina and Don Pietro, and so perceives a total unity and continuity of narrative and representation. The critic, by contrast, perceives a work of *assembly*. Viewers find the whole sequence entirely coherent, which confirms the appropriateness of the filmmakers' choice on formal grounds, 'shaping' the assembly for the purposes of the whole artefact. The filmmakers were concerned with the aesthetic qualities of the artefact, but it was only after they had completed it, and seen the response of viewers, that they realized what it was they had assembled. It is unlikely that they thought for one moment that half a century later a film historian (Gian Piero Brunetta) would say about the sequence:

> Indeed, one is more and more inclined to think that in future it will be possible to recognise, study and understand the meaning of the Italian and European Resistance struggle from a single sequence of *Roma città aperta* (that of, for example, the death of sora Pina) much more than from consulting dozens of history books and thousands of pages of documents.[32]

If what Brunetta says is true, this is due to the aesthetic properties of the artefact, and to the 'deeper' levels of narrative reference, rather than to the 'surface' level of 'realist representation,' because the actual events surrounding Maria Teresa Gullace's death bore only a limited resemblance to what is depicted in *Roma città aperta*. In order to describe the *nature* of the artefact at this point, we need rhetorical and narrative notions. Notions of 'fact' and indexical representation, proper to cinematic 'realism,' are of little use to us.

Via Tasso

When the film first appeared, there were a number of critics who expressed reservations about the torture scene in the Via Tasso Gestapo

headquarters. One contemporary newspaper review is particularly revealing because it condenses in a single paragraph many of the notions applied to 'art' and 'realism' that we examined in chapter 2. Rather than send the reader back to that chapter, I shall repeat Sarazini's comments here:

> The fiction acquires an impact that has the flavour of historical chronicle; and not through crude description, since the plot, in this first part, takes flight towards an ideal realism, towards which, henceforth, all our films should aim ... Where we are not in agreement with Rossellini is in the second part, where a harsh realism exceeds the boundaries of the aesthetic. The reality reproduced in a waxworks museum is never art. This means that in wanting to transfer into the realm of art certain monstrous realities, Rossellini has fallen into a rhetoric appropriate to Grand Guignol, which neither serves nor obeys the pure and stable laws of poetic transfiguration – laws that exclude certain appearances and facts, unless they are diluted in the inspiration of an ideal synthesis.[33]

Sarazani brings together 'art' and 'realism' by appealing to idealist notions. The 'fiction' acquires its 'impact' from the 'truth value' (*logos*) of 'historical chronicle.' This is not, however, achieved by a purely surface level of representation, 'crude description,' but by being raised to the level of 'an ideal realism,' 'an ideal synthesis.' A 'harsh realism' is incompatible with the aesthetic ('the realm of art'); 'art' requires the 'laws of poetic transfiguration.' Without the idealist appeal to deeper levels of narrative reference, crude representation becomes, according to Sarazani, rhetorical Grand Guignol (nowadays we might call it 'sensationalism').

Indro Montanelli also demurred in his review of the film: 'Of the two hours of the film show, only ten minutes left us dissatisfied: those of the torture, which we would have preferred less explicit.'[34] Rossellini apparently would have preferred not to show the torture itself, but Amidei insisted that it was a historical fact that needed documenting. French viewers of *Roma città aperta* were enormously impressed by a film that finally represented the hard reality (torture) that lay behind so much of the Resistance struggle. Rossellini was right to worry about the decorum that too much 'realism' would infringe. Torture is a very intimate physical act, and to portray it in film to an audience is pornographic. But having it witnessed by Don Pietro, and giving the audience a position alongside Don Pietro, emphasizes the public, polit-

ical, and theatrical nature of the event, and prevents it from becoming pornographic.

Amidei countered Rossellini's reluctance with the assertion of a documentary *function* (that of making known historical facts) for the scene. Hence, it has two functions: one dramatic and expressive, the other documentary. Both the 'expression' of a national response to the German occupation and the 'documentation' of what that occupation involved were features of the film that contributed to its being considered the inauguration of neorealism.

Partisans were frequently arrested on the basis of information received from informers. Both Lieutenant Colonel Herbert Kappler (who operated from a building in Via Tasso) and the Fascist police lieutenant Pietro Koch (who operated in a commandeered hotel, Pensione Oltremare in Via Principe Amedeo, and later in the Pensione Jaccarino) made routine use of torture, in which the victims were frequently disfigured, crippled, blinded, and killed. Successful and unsuccessful suicide attempts by prisoners were not uncommon. The number of detainees who refused to divulge information even under the most atrocious torture was high. On one occasion, Fascist troops aimed wide in a firing squad, and the condemned men had to be finished off by the German officer present with a pistol shot to the back of the head. Don Morosini (one of the models for Don Pietro) was dispatched in this way, but by an Italian officer.

In critical evaluations of *Roma città aperta* there has been a tendency to see the first half of the film as 'realist,' and the second half as 'generic,' whereas in fact it is the other way round.

The drama of the interrogation scene works by contrasts. An essentially theatrical dynamic is constructed out of a small number of ingredients: the set (three adjoining rooms: Bergmann's office, the torture chamber, and the salon), the action (the torture as an act, the torture as spectacle, and Bergmann's movements between the rooms), and the three characters (Bergmann, Manfredi, Don Pietro). To these ingredients are added secondary ones (Ingrid and Marina, Hartmann, the Austrian deserter hanging himself) that serve to tie up the narrative – though Hartmann's speech serves a function in the play of dramatic contrasts, as we shall see. After Don Pietro has delivered his curse and then repented, an epilogue to the whole sequence is furnished by Hartmann, seated on a chair and looking into space: 'We are the master race!'

The drama hinges on the way Harry Feist performs the role of Bergmann, which contributes to generating meaning in the scene. Just as the

first half of the film gathers much of its impact from the histrionic talents of Anna Magnani, the second half relies heavily on those of Harry Feist. Manfredi and Don Pietro do not change in this scene. They are endowed with 'heroism' by the actions and behaviour of Bergmann, and by the fact that they do nothing; they remain the same. It has to be admitted that Don Pietro does change a little, at one point, where he pronounces his curse on Bergmann, but he quickly retracts it, and returns to being 'the same.' Hence, the drama and its meaning (variously interpreted as 'quiet heroism' and 'humanity') are produced by the context in which the two Italian characters remain 'the same.' Bergmann's role is to provide the context in which this steadiness acquires meaning, and it is the job of Harry Feist (and the dubber, Giulio Panicali) to project that role.

The attributes with which the scene endows Bergmann can be listed without recourse to much interpretation. He is presented as at first polite and well mannered. The real Herbert Kappler admitted that he had once struck a prisoner, but claimed that he had immediately apologized. Certainly, for the purposes of the drama, it would slightly drain the scene of meaning if Bergmann were portrayed as being totally *unaware* of the humanity of his prisoners. For example, the tactic of forcing Don Pietro to watch Manfredi's torture depends on Bergmann's knowing and appreciating the suffering this would cause. Bergmann's portrayal is given impact by the way he abruptly switches from being humane to indifferent.

As a narrative event, making Don Pietro watch Manfredi's interrogation is not 'realistic' because, where it really is important to get information from two prisoners, letting one know what the other has or has not told you is about the worst tactic you could use. The drama and its meaning, however, depend on Don Pietro's response to a *context*, and the device of having him watch the torture creates precisely that context. Moreover, the viewer is given a reason for watching the torture by this dramatic device – not only a reason, but also a point of view, that of Don Pietro. Manfredi is led to another room behind a closed door. Sound off would have *signified* adequately the torture (as it did in the earlier scene of the torture of the 'professor'). Bergmann's action in opening the door and then leaving Don Pietro with this vision is the dramatic device that endows Don Pietro's passivity with meaning. Later, while Bergmann watches and frets in irritation and frustration, Ingrid comes in to get a cigarette, and at one point goes over to watch the torture. She is satisfied that Manfredi has not spoken, because it is

like a bet she has won with Bergmann: 'I told you it wouldn't be easy.' When, however, Hartmann enters, together with Marina, he is immediately shocked at what he sees, and looks over at Marina in concern to see what effect it is having on her. Hence, the drama builds up layers of contrast as it progresses, and uses Hartmann as an ethical foil to Bergmann and Ingrid.

The theatricality of the scene (both in the dramatic conflict and in the three-winged stage of the adjoining rooms) derives partly from the theatricality inherent in interrogation and torture themselves: they are a formalized ritual, with a predictable course, and essentially repetitive. The first step in the ritual is Bergmann's turning his desk light to shine in Manfredi's face. It is understandable, therefore, but not necessarily correct, to suspect that this scene was a product of generic construction. Although he is not the most valuable human being in the scene and his knowledge is deliberately coded as being of low quality, Bergmann is the scene's dramatic pivot; it all revolves around him, and is, in a way, a play, a ballet, a performance directed by him. To judge the scene's theatricality as falling into genre misses the point that the theatricality is thematic; it is as much a part of the content as of the style. The fact that there is interrogation and torture in the film is pure chronicle, almost documentary. This floor of a building in Via Tasso is where the partisan war in Rome was played out – anything *else* would have been a generic device. To emphasize its theatricality, to portray it as a matter of display, is a rhetorical device. But it is a motivated device, because torture *functions* as display in a strategy of terror. To this day, prisoners are regularly tortured as a deterrent. Part of the result of the expressive device is to fashion a message that the theatrical display did not work on either Manfredi or Don Pietro. Their 'humanity' is given poetic expression, is enshrined in an image: that of being immune to theatricality. The *sermo humilis* of their lowered voices, quiet tones, and unremarkable dress (in contrast with Bergmann's rhetorical display) functions as a sign of their humanity (Auerbach's 'sublime' – see the section on 'Rhetoric' in chapter 2) in a code of binary opposites. Bergmann, in his fastidious, rhetorical self-consciousness, sets up one pole of this opposition; all you need are a few touches to set up the other pole. A slight messiness, a lack of self-consciousness, and you have created the 'opposite' of Bergmann: you have evoked a man of great humanity and depth compared with an icon of shallowness. It is the lightness of touch with regard to Bergmann – indeed, endowing the dandy with his own shallow humanity – that endows Don Pietro with his profound compassion. 'Lack of rheto-

ric' in the portrayal of Don Pietro, in other words, is part of an essentially rhetorical deployment of *sermo humilis*.

The torture also functions at a deeper level of narrative reference, that of the melodramatic matrix. Bergmann makes a wager with Ingrid: that Manfredi will give a higher priority to his own, individual interests (survival and the avoidance of pain) than to the interests of the 'organism' (the Resistance) of which he is a part. The two 'ontologies' that we schematically identified in chapter 2 are placed in conflict. Manfredi, by accepting pain and death, chooses the 'organic' ontology and, by being certain that he is acting for the best, affirms it as metaphysically 'truer' than the new 'modernizing' ontology of individualism that Bergmann confidently champions (and propounds to Hartmann in the salon). For this reason, Ingrid's coming into the office and positively crowing over the likely outcome of Bergmann's wager, and Bergmann's extreme irritation, are not just 'realistic' psychological details of the narrative, but are elements emphasizing the scene's profounder ethical implications. Similarly, earlier on in the interrogation, when Bergmann questions Manfredi's alliance with 'monarchists,' and Don Pietro's alliance with atheistic communists, Rossellini does not have the Italians respond with arguments. This is because Bergmann is portraying 'Italy' as an institution constituted by *competing* individual political interests. Merely by ignoring his blandishments, Manfredi and Don Pietro attest to the metaphysical notion of 'Italy' as an ideal organism. With hindsight, we might view Rossellini's representation more sceptically, but it is easy to see how *at the time* it was taken as a representation of the 'truth' about the kind of 'universals' that lay behind the Italian resistance to the German occupation. Independently of the 'realism' or otherwise of the *representation* lies the 'truth' of the *discourse*.

Two points of view operate for the viewer: that of Don Pietro, seated in his chair, with whose eyes we see into the torture chamber (a matter of *mise en scène*), and that of Bergmann (a matter of montage, as we follow him into the salon). The cutting of the sequence carries Bergmann's impatient irritation. The drama comes from the torture itself, and two different reactions to it, and depends to a certain extent on Bergmann's *awareness* of the difference between the two responses (which he expresses to Hartmann, in terms of its being 'interesting'). This is effective, very economical dramaturgy. The 'triptych' stage on which it is composed (Bergmann's office, with on one side the salon and on the other the torture chamber) similarly has the qualities of economy and effectiveness.

This economy has led to the characterization of Rossellini's work with the word 'simplicity.' The rhetoric can be understated: there is no need to make Bergmann a monster; just make him a dandy, and set up a contrast with a humble priest, whose broken spectacles function as a sort of 'opposite' to dandiness. Neither Don Pietro nor Manfredi ever show irritation. They are not distressed at their treatment. Instead, they accept profound suffering. The contrast has been set up between superficiality and profundity.

The 'meaning' of all this for the history of the Resistance is a matter for interpretation. Description has done its job when it has shown how the effect has been created. The dramatic work is an aesthetic achievement; the interpretative response is a matter of reception. Aesthetics must concern itself with the 'object,' rather than with the use to which it is put, which is a matter of cultural history.

It is clear that *Roma città aperta* is not a documentary; it is a fictional film. However, the narrative *refers*, by means of iconic signs, to events that actually took place and to people who actually existed. We could call the direction of this reference 'upwards' towards the surface, towards the specific, the concrete, and the particular. We could describe the film's generic, melodramatic reference to other narratives as going in a 'downward' direction, towards a deeper, less particular, more general, and even universal level. The fact that *Roma città aperta* carries both movements, upwards and downwards, accounts for how it can be seen as both realist, documentary representation and ideological 'myth.' This ambiguous reception of the film concerns its 'content,' and is dependent on whether the movement of reference upwards is privileged, or the movement downwards. It is essentially a question of interpretation. However, the oscillation between two views of the film as 'document' or 'rhetoric' also concerns the 'form' of the artefact itself, as an object, and to that extent is essentially a question of aesthetics. This question is then contaminated with the question of evaluation insofar as a critical context has existed in Italy in which a 'documentary' *form* is given positive connotations (neorealist innovation, authenticity) and a 'rhetorical' *form* negative ones (conventional commercial cinema, Hollywood, genre, escapism). Similarly, 'document' would privilege the movement upwards of the reference, and 'rhetoric' the movement downwards. Thus it is that description, interpretation, and evaluation are bound up together, and interpretation and evaluation tend to colonize description.

Roma città aperta and Neorealism

> For us, the important thing was to be able to start working and begin to recount what had happened, what we had seen. We were not thinking of renewing who-knows-what ... When the Americans arrived here, everybody emerged from the woodwork, very keen to get back to work and also very hungry, to tell the truth. This is what influenced the birth of neorealism! ... When – it was 1945 – I went to her house in Via Amba Aradam, where she was living at the time, to show her and read to her the script of *Roma, città aperta* [*sic*], she told me – I remember it as though it were yesterday, and I remember everything, even what others have forgotten – she said: 'It is the most beautiful story that I have ever read and also that I have ever seen.' Well, if I have to be honest, Anna's feeling was one which neither I nor Rossellini had at the time. We made that film because we had stories to tell, certainly, but above all because we badly needed to work and to eat ... For example, the fact of Fabrizi and Magnani. Actors taken from the street, my eye! Certainly, there were those too, but the film could only get made because Fabrizi and Magnani were in it, and were already very famous, and together assured us a minimum guarantee [at the box office]. The bottom line was these two names, who were basically the only ones, I have to admit, ... to have a strong feeling that it was a great film, much more than either of us.
>
> Sergio Amidei[35]

Our discussion of *Roma città aperta* has consisted of fragmentary approaches, looking at the film from different perspectives, as the product of a large number of experiences and aspirations that were in the air at the time. The filmmakers (Rossellini and Amidei) describe themselves as not having been aware of what exactly they were doing. They were trying to put together a film, but what kind of film they were trying to put together was something that they discovered as they made it, and then when the public responded to it. One thing that was clear was that they were *assembling* the film from diverse fragments. Other artists were doing the same around them at the time: De Santis assembling partisan stories for his script of *G.A.P.*; he, Visconti, and Serandrei assembling almost journalistic, documentary accounts of the last days of the war in *Giorni di gloria*. Behind these activities lay the thinking of the 1930s, of Visconti and Antonioni, about how film had the capacity to make 'idealist' narrative (in the sense referred to in chapter 2) out of

CHRISTOPHER WAGSTAFF

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