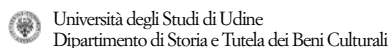


A History of Cinema Without Names: A Research Project

Udine – Gorizia FilmForum 2015
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XXII International Film Studies Conference
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University of Udine

a cura di

Diego Cavallotti
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Dipartimento
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Reflections on A History of Italian Cinema Without Names: Comedy and Melodrama Revisited

Something like twenty years ago, almost an eternity indeed, I published a volume on Italian cinema, and since I have always been quite terrible with titling my own work, fortunately, the title of that book was suggested to me by a belated dear friend of mine, Robert Dombroski,¹ during a bus journey from Agrigento to Catania, while the sun was shining over an extraordinary Mediterranean sea.

Italian Filmmaking: Strategies of Subversion is that title, and it is followed by a subtitle, due to publisher's strategies, which contains a list of names, such as Pirandello, Fellini, Scola and the directors of the new generation. I believe time has come to explain why Robert suggested such title and why I welcomed it.² The occasion has been the *XXII International Film Studies Conference* in Udine where we have been solicited to think about film history in new terms; we have been invited to reflect on alternative ways of writing the development of what has been the most powerful means of expression and representation, and yet also an extraordinary myth-maker during the entire twentieth century: the cinema. We have been invited and solicited, then, to contribute to a discussion which may lead us to the creation of "a new 'topography' of the basic stylistic elements that, while common to both authors and styles, can also find independent and diverse modes of connection," as one reads in the call for papers. Quite interestingly, when I started working on my 1995 volume, I fundamentally placed myself exactly in that particular position whereby one attempts to overcome traditional approaches to film history – notwithstanding the many names in the title! My case study was Italian cinema for a number of reasons which I shall try and describe here – beside, of course, my deep love for it!

The first observation which prompted me to find an alternative approach to the historical development of our national cinema was that, leaving aside some exceptions, mostly not too relevant, in the aftermath of World War II, Italian film always escaped and still escapes traditional definitions of genre; that is, generic cinema certainly exists in an Italian context, and yet it has either found not much space (see for instance the case of horror cinema and/or western cinema) or has been thoroughly reinterpreted.³ Consequently, for decades, the great temptation of Italian film historians has been that of somewhat writing the history of this national cinema in the aftermath of World War II, in particular, as if it were the history of an "auteur cinema," which is a filmic tradition that developed in time as a gigantic aggregation of solipsistic voices and gazes, and was fundamentally modernist in nature. Thus, I felt then, and to a large extent I still feel today, that traditional approaches to Italian film history, and by "traditional" I mean approaches that focus primarily and simply on genre and author, were not satisfactory. For the most part, such approaches left style at the borders of the discussion, and did not provide us with a working model that would truly account for the uniqueness and richness of such national cinema, nor would it make us capable of truly detect the recurrences, but also the significant diversities which mark such filmic tradition, nor would it be capable of allowing us to connect the Italian cinematic experience to all the other artistic experiences which made it possible, which nourished it,

and with which, to a larger extent than it happens, let's say, for American cinema, it shared themes and formal strategies. Fundamentally, I realized that what ought to be accounted for was the kind of short-circuit between diverse fields of artistic expression which is a true trademark of the Italian cultural experience, and not only in modern and contemporary times.

Obviously, to aggregate data around the notion of author and genre has been quite useful and fruitful over the decades since it has allowed to come to a kind of "canonization" of film as it developed in time; and yet, it seems to me that in the process we have often "forgotten" other and extremely relevant pieces of information, beside having tried to canonize something which escapes the very notion of "canon" itself. Thus, I attempted to pursue an alternative path, and recognized that since the immediate aftermaths of World War II, Italian film has developed in ways that hardly fit such traditional approaches; I tried, then, to "read and interpret" the history of Italian film according to two grand notions which seemed and still seem thoroughly present in our national cinematography, that is, melodrama and humour, and insodoing I inevitably ended up dismantling traditional readings of such national cinema. Naturally, as it happens any time one tries to outline approaches that strongly go against tradition, and try and traverse unpredictable paths, I came into difficulties and, surely, even errors; yet, I feel that to illustrate such an attempt may be of interest to our project.

In my 1995 study, I ended up focusing ultimately and primarily on humour, while the issue of a melodramatic imagination in Italian film history remained at the borders, waiting to be investigated. In my analysis, I first moved from a fundamental consideration, and precisely the fact that in the nineteenth century several new interpretations of comedy evolve. Notwithstanding the many differences, for instance, between Bergson and Freud, in the passage from the nineteenth to the twentieth century they both contributed to the elaboration of a new approach to the mechanisms lying as foundations of laughter; such a new interpretation of comedy or, rather, humour became then increasingly relevant to the delineation of a contemporary poetics. Indeed, the passage from *irony*, characteristic of nineteenth century poetics, to *humor* as a constitutive element of artistic representation marks the introduction of a tragic note largely attested by twentieth century poetics, which generally assigned humor an increasingly conspicuous role. Indeed, this movement began in the nineteenth century, and Charles Baudelaire can be considered amongst the first artists and intellectuals who consciously addressed this issue in both their creative and theoretical writings.⁴

Further in my investigation, I realized that almost a "genetic trace" links Baudelaire to an Italian author, who, before and more than any other, was responsible for the elaboration of a new approach to narrative and dramatic discourse in an Italian context, that is, Luigi Pirandello. Indeed, he was the true founder of that serio-comic or humoristic mode of discourse that was going to play a pivotal role in the development of Italian twentieth century poetics. This mode of discourse is characterized by the contamination of comedy and tragedy, and produces diversified results reflecting different signifying and cognitive strategies in narrative and dramatic discourses.

Further in my work, I proceed to prove that at times one records the supremacy of comedy, or rather "humour" in Pirandello's definition, and this occurs in works that are primarily concerned with extradiegetic issues and engage the reader/viewer in social and political commentary – as it happens, for instance, in the so-called "comedy Italian style." At other times, one observes the predominance of melodrama, a genre that better serves an Italian sensibility, in works that are often preoccupied with reflecting on the status of the artistic representation of the Real, and thus become extremely self-reflexive and self-referential – as it happens, for instance, in the cinema of Michelangelo Antonioni. In a few circumstances, one records the fair balance between comedy and melodrama, or else, comedy and tragedy, and thus an equal tension in understanding the essence and status of the work of art, as well as in investigating and criticizing the existing social and political establishment – as it happens in the works of many so-called "auteurs" of Italian cinema, such as Federico Fellini, but also, quite interestingly, Pier Paolo Pasolini, and later Ettore Scola, as well as several directors of what was called "the new generation," such as Nanni Moretti – just to name names! Needless to say, these filmmakers are profoundly different from one another, and yet their works can be rightly inscribed in that mode of discourse that has been diversely defined as "serio-comic" or "humoristic." This particular discursive and narrative strategy becomes then a *hypergenre*, a container within

which a free contamination between comedy and tragedy, comedy and melodrama, as well as between allegory and symbolism, significantly occurs.⁵

Moved by the desire to draw a kind of new “topography” of Italian post-war cinema, and upon having placed these relevant prefatory observations, one must once again acknowledge a well-known fact: in the history of Italian post-war cinema, Roberto Rossellini and Vittorio De Sica not only were two of the masters of Italian Neorealism, but also played a primary role in paving the way for its overcoming, and indicated relevant venues for future developments in Italian cinematic production. It is Rossellini’s *Voyage to Italy* (*Viaggio in Italia*) made in 1951, that initiates what I term “a melodramatic imagination” in Italian modern cinema. As we all know, this movie stands in an open dialogue with the first important *journey* in the history of Italian post-war cinema, that is, Rossellini’s own *Paisan* (*Paisà*, 1946). Yet, while the 1946 film was a journey of discovery of the geographical and social parts of Italy that had never been shown on the screen before, and as such, a journey intended to “free” our country and our collective imagination, *Voyage to Italy* is a “journey” in the inner landscape of the characters, and in many ways is the precursor of most Modern cinema in general, and in the Italian context, certainly of Michelangelo Antonioni’s many investigations of the mind and of reality. “It seems impossible to view *Voyage to Italy* without feeling with the evidence of a lash that this film opens a breach, and that the whole cinema must trespass it in order not to die,” so wrote Jacques Rivette in a 1955 essay,⁶ and by doing so he intervened in the debate on Modern cinema, and forever transformed it in a debate on “before and after Rossellini,” along the path the Italian director indicated with *Voyage to Italy*.

Yet, what was happening with Rossellini and his *Voyage to Italy* had already happened in literature: in 1949, for instance, Alberto Moravia published a novel, often forgotten, *L’amore coniugale*, in which, regardless of some obvious differences with the film, many are the echoes of the theme and style one finds a few years later in Rossellini’s work. Not a case of adaptation of course, but certainly and unquestionably a case of “synergy,” almost like in “communicating vessels” of macluhanian memory, between two representatives of Italian Modernity, one of which, Moravia, was to be significantly brought to the screen by one of the champions of Modernist cinema, that is, Jean-Luc Godard with *Le Mépris*, a film adaptation of Moravia’s 1954 novel with the same title. This is of course just one example of the many one could make on the development of a “melodramatic imagination” in Italian cultural history as it developed in the aftermath of World War II. Such an approach may prove extremely fruitful to overcome traditional boundaries between diverse formal constructions, as well as between different means of expression and representation.

The term melodrama is used here with no reference to the rhetorical and sentimental cinematic melodramas of the 1930s and 1950s,⁷ and thus with no reference to a generic tradition, no matter how ambiguous and unstable; by resorting to the term “melodrama” I intend to define a new style which came to be at a precise moment in history, and precisely in the 1950s, which anchored itself to a specific genre, “cinema melò,” but then subverted the characteristics of the genre, or rather undermined them, since, as Morreale pointedly observes: “In 1950s film melodrama [...] norm and sabotage seem to coincide.”⁸ Such a novel and profoundly modernist style pursued diverse formal strategies, different interrelationships between word and image, as well as between music and image, and unmistakably stated the impossibility for cinema to express, fully and unambiguously, its relationship with Reality.⁹ On the other hand, as Guglielmo Pescatore rightly observes,

in film melodrama there happens, though, that the body is voice, it is a speaking body [...] If it is true, as Chion¹⁰ states, that cinema realizes the dualism, never truly resolved, between body and voice, and that the latter is desperately searching a body, a symbolic place, it is also true that the body searches for a voice, a place of word. Furthermore, melodrama is a means through which we give voice to the body, we let it speak. Beside being a narrative mechanism, then, melodrama is also a producer of signs – mostly body.¹¹

Then, in Italy the 1950s bring a new awareness of the mechanisms lying at the foundation of a new interpretation of melodrama, one by which the dualism between voice and body, apparently resolved in early film melodrama, seems to be superseded by subtraction and becomes a memory, a trace filled with nostalgia, something to be longed for, or rather, the source of a profoundly desperate feeling of loss – as it happens, for instance, in many of Michelangelo Antonioni’s cinematic melodramas.

Unquestionably, then, Roberto Rossellini's *Voyage to Italy* constitutes the "ideal" beginning of this new "melodramatic imagination" in Italian cinema. Complex and increasingly abstract cinematic, but also literary, narratives there developed, narratives that primarily attempted to investigate and express human relationships as well as the increasingly difficult relationships between people and environment, people and objects, and they did so by constantly re-defining and often truly undermining their own status as mechanical representations of those relationships. The filmic narratives that assumed this perspective may thus be described as self-reflexive and therefore "meta-cinematic," and as such, mark the upheaval of Modernist cinema with unprecedented vigor, as pointedly observed by Jacques Rivette.¹²

The work that has best tried and rehabilitated *melodrama* is, unmistakably, Peter Brooks's *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama and the Mode of Excess* (1976), in which the author provides us with an original interpretation and, indeed, a re-evaluation of the nineteenth century melodramatic project, one which is still today "the best grounding for an understanding of its carryover into twentieth-century mass culture," as rightly stated by Linda Williams.¹³ In his study, Brooks intended to trace the origins of melodrama in French popular theatre, and explained the reasons of its rise and persistence. Williams notes that, paradoxically, Brooks's great advantage was his ignorance of film theory and criticism.

*Unlike film critics who have seen melodrama as an anachronism to be overcome and subverted, Brooks takes it seriously as a quintessential modern (though not modernist) form arising out of a particular historical conjuncture: the postrevolutionary, post-Enlightenment, postsacred world where traditional imperatives of truth and morality had been violently questioned and yet in which there was still a need to forge some semblance of truth and morality.*¹⁴

Brooks's central thesis becomes, then, crucial to our understanding of the resurgence of melodrama in post-war Italian cinema, since he maintains that

*in the absence of a moral and social order linked to the sacred, and in the presence of a reduced private and social sphere that has become the entire realm of personal significance, a theatrical form of sensation developed that carried the burden of expressing what Brooks calls the "moral occult," the domain operative spiritual values which both indicated within and masked by the surface of reality." This quest for a hidden moral legibility is crucial to all melodrama.*¹⁵

The implications to such a thesis to a discussion on post-war Italian cinema seem manifold, and certainly call for further investigation.

On the other hand, going back to our original statement about the inner ability, or rather inclination Italian cinema, and indeed any other Italian artistic expression, displays to reinterpret generic categories; and furthermore, recalling our observation about the prevalence of two modes of discourse, melodramatic and humoristic, as trademarks of the Italian cultural experience, it is De Sica's *Miracle in Milan* (1950) the film that opens the way to a new and diverse kind of "comic imagination" in an Italian cinematic context: in the sign of "comedy" and beginning with De Sica's 1950 film, Italian cinema was to begin its investigation of the mystery of life and its many *miracles*. The interplay between fiction and documentary, comedy and tragedy was then to constitute a large segment of Italian cinematic production to the point of eventually pushing narrative and discourse forward, and exploring even the possibilities offered by *fantasy* and *utopia*. Within this particular framework, many examples could be brought to scientific investigation in the period going from the 1960's to the present, and they would embrace works as diverse as *Hawks and Sparrows* (*Uccellacci e uccellini*, 1966) by Pier Paolo Pasolini and *The Voice of the Moon* (*La voce della luna*, 1990) by Federico Fellini.

As variously argued, even such masterpieces of cinematic Neorealism as *Rome Open City* (*Roma città aperta*, 1945) and *Bicycle Thieves* (*Ladri di biciclette*, 1948) contain elements of comedy and melodrama intertwined, and yet it is with both *Miracle in Milan* and *Voyage to Italy*, significantly made in two consecutive years, that Italian cinema consciously moves beyond Neorealism and starts exploring new avenues for the investigation and the representation of Reality.

While before and during Fascism Italian cinema mostly expressed itself *via* formalized and codifiable genres, after the Second World War this national cinema constantly attempted to escape easy and formulaic solutions

as it aimed at establishing the identity of a country as well as its own. And yet, this did not merely happen in the cinematic experience, since, as observed by Gian Piero Brunetta, “in cinema like in literature, comedy collects the *drosses* of the other genres and does not wish to assert its own narrative and expressive autonomy.”¹⁶ With this statement, Gian Piero Brunetta solicits our investigation by pointing out at both the fertile connection between diverse fields of artistic expression, and the mobile and fluid nature of comedy. Such definition perfectly adheres to the spirit of Italian cinematic comedy as it progressively developed into a mode of discourse that can move freely between genres. By not aiming at establishing its narrative and expressive autonomy, and thus authority, such national interpretation of comedy was fundamentally subversive of established discursive strategies and critical towards the existing social organization. On the other hand, as pointedly observed by Maurizio Grande, “the structure of comedy entails an initial movement of disintegration of the ‘original environment’ and a final reintegration of the social body, in which one fully admits the characters who had previously been excluded.”¹⁷

Generally speaking, then, Italian film comedy as it developed in the aftermath of World War II moves away from traditional definitions of cinematic comedy as they evolved in both an anglo-american and a francophone context. Indeed, in post-war Italy, film comedy was and still is firmly grounded in *realism*; it concerns itself with actuality, portrays “negative” heroes, and produces mostly episodic and inconclusive narratives. For quite some time, critics agreed in identifying comic films produced between 1958 and 1968 as a “national genre” bearing the label “comedy Italian style.” This definition was coined by French critics when they “discovered” Italian film comedy in the 1970s,¹⁸ and contains partially diminishing connotations which recent critical investigation has attempted to remove by inserting the comic production of the period passing from the 1950s to the 1960s in a continuum, or rather in a constant progression of the genre. Italian cinematic comedy has undergone an *unlimited semiosis* by reworking the codes, the morphology, and the syntax of the genre as it participated in and reflected the incessant change of Italian post-war society. By constantly involving itself with extradiegetic concerns, Italian film comedy has changed *via* its thorough permeability to the social and political transformations the whole country has experienced.

Diverse critical interpretations have developed over the years, and they all agree on one basic concept: Italian film comedy cannot be defined as a “genre.” It has been variously defined as “metagenre” in an attempt to explain its elasticity, its attitude to traverse and appropriate different genres¹⁹; it has also been called a “super-genre” or “infragenre,” since “‘our comedy’ contains some of the codes of the ‘genre,’ but it applies them in an unpredictable way: of the ‘genre’ it does not possess the limitations, the constant elements, the reiterations, the topical loci, the permanent structures.”²⁰

In *Il cinema di Saturno*, Maurizio Grande discusses Italian film comedy against the background of comedy as “macrogenre,” while Gian Piero Brunetta, in his *Cent’anni di cinema italiano* and while discussing the evolution of Italian cinematic comedy from 1945 to the 1960s, states that in the third stage of its development, comedy meets history and “practically, within a limited amount of time, comedy becomes a kind of large container for the transfer of all types of material and the assembly of progressively larger and more complex codes and motifs.”²¹

Even Ettore Scola, the director who was eventually called on to collect and preserve the heritage and the memory of the “genre,” at one point stated that “for what the ‘comedy Italian style’ is concerned, it has become a *super-genre* and will soon find clearer differentiations. Even the critic will have to redefine our films by inventing new classifications.”²²

Scola then calls the critic to a revision of Italian cinematic comedy, and to a redefinition which would necessarily employ different critical categories. Such critical work still needs to be brought to completion, notwithstanding the recent and precious contributions which have certainly deepened our understanding of that rich moment in the history of our national cinema.²³

Indeed, already in 1939, Vittorio Metz, an Italian humorist, writer and scripwriter, declared in an interview:

*In Italy, in less than a decade, one has created a new kind of humor, extremely modern, unmistakable and entirely ours, with absolutely original characteristics. We Italian humorists are outside the path of French comicality as well as removed from the so-called English humor; for years, we have progressed within a totally different territory. Our humor is fervent, disconcerting and withering, a violent humor that possesses the extremely rare quality of easily reaching out for both the intellectuals and the populace.*²⁴

A comedic mode that ultimately, as Luigi Pirandello had already asserted thirty years before, gave rise to a new tragic mode, which seemed the only possible one in a hero-less and godless universe.

Unfortunately, Scola's call for a redefinition of Italian cinematic comedy remained mostly unheard, leaving aside a few notable exceptions, such as Maurizio Grande's contribution, and perhaps today we can finally proceed to such a revision of our comedic, or rather, humoristic cinema; hopefully, by following the line of investigation I merely outlined here, with a new centrality given to both comedy and melodrama, we can go further, and we may truly manage to construct a new topography of the Italian cinematic experience.

Notes

- ¹ To understand who was Prof. Robert S. Dombroski, I wish to quote the opening remarks of a special issue of *The Edinburgh Journal of Gadda Studies*, dedicated to his memory: "Il 10 maggio scorso [2002] si è spento all'Hopital American di Neuilly-sur-Seine Robert S. Dombroski, docente presso il Graduate Center della City University di New York, dopo una quasi ventennale esperienza professionale presso la University of Connecticut, a Storrs, dove ha contribuito a fare della sezione d'Italianistica, negli anni '80, uno dei punti di riferimento accademici più importanti fuori d'Italia. Per poter comprendere quale fosse il raggio di interessi dell'uomo ed intellettuale scomparso, si può partire dall'indicazione contenuta alla voce Dombroski nel sito della CUNY: 'literature and intellectual history of 19th and 20th century Italy'. La letteratura, dunque, mai disgiunta dal contesto storico-culturale che l'ha prodotta." Maurizio Rebaudengo, "In memoria di Robert S. Dombroski. Un nuovo umanesimo nella didattica letteraria," <http://www.gadda.ed.ac.uk/Pages/journal/issue2/articles/rebaudengoricordo.php>; last visit November 24th, 2015.
- ² Cf. Manuela Gieri, *Italian Contemporary Filmmaking: Strategies of Subversion. Pirandello, Fellini, Scola and the Directors of the New Generation*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1995.
- ³ One examples for all may be the so-called "Spaghetti Western" cinema, and particularly Sergio Leone's own personal interpretation of one of the most established and powerful American genres.
- ⁴ Four texts are of utmost importance to a discussion of laughter in Modernity. First of all, Charles Baudelaire's *De l'essence du rire et généralement du comique dans les arts plastiques*, published in 1855; then, Henry Bergson's *Le Rire*, first published in instalments in the *Revue de France* in 1899 and collected in volume in 1900, and Sigmund Freud's essay on jokes, *Der Witz und Seine Beziehung zum Unbewussten*, published in 1905, that is only three years before Luigi Pirandello's *On Humor*.
- ⁵ In particular, see Chapter IV, V, and VI in Manuela Gieri, *Italian Filmmaking: Strategies of Subversion*, cit.
- ⁶ Cf. Jacques Rivette, "Lettre sur Rossellini," in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, n. 46, April 1955, pp. 14-24.
- ⁷ On melodrama in Italian cinema, one may see Emiliano Morreale, *Così piangevano: il cinema melò nell'Italia degli anni cinquanta*, Roma, Donzelli 2011; Lucia Cardone, *Il melodramma*, Il Castoro, Milano 2012; Sara Pesce (ed.), *Imitazioni della vita: il melodramma cinematografico*, Le Mani, Recco 2007; see also, in particular, the first chapter, "La musica negli occhi," in Guglielmo Pescatore, *La voce e il corpo: l'opera lirica*, Campanotto, Piasan di Prato 2001, pp. 13-33; of some interest, one may find Catherine O'Rawe's article "'Avanti a lui tremava tutta Roma': Opera, Melodrama and the Resistance," in *Modern Italy*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2012, pp. 185-196.
- ⁸ "Nel melò degli anni cinquanta [...] la norma e il sabotaggio sembrano coincidere". Emiliano Morreale, *Così piangevano: il cinema melò nell'Italia degli anni cinquanta*, cit., p. 13 (my translation).
- ⁹ A wealth of important critical and theoretical contributions have been published over the decades on the issue of cinematic style, and I shall not cite them all, due to limitations of space. I wish to remember the proceedings of the 2006 Film Forum, that is, Enrico Biasin, Giulio Bursi, Leonardo Quaresima (eds.), *Lo stile cinematografico/The Cinematographic Style*, Proceedings of XIII Convegno Internazionale di Studi sul Cinema/International Film Studies Conference (Udine; March 27th-30th 2006), Forum, Udine 2006.

- ¹⁰ Cf. Michel Chion, *La voce nel cinema (La voix au cinéma)*, l'Etoile, Paris 1982), Pratiche, Parma 1991, pp. 149-178.
- ¹¹ “Nel melodramma cinematografico succede però che *il corpo è voce*, ossia è un corpo parlante. [...] Se è vero, come sostiene Chion, che il cinema attua un dualismo, mai completamente composto tra corpo e voce, e che quest'ultima è alla disperata ricerca di un corpo, di un suo luogo simbolico, è pur vero che il corpo, per suo conto, cerca una voce, un luogo di parola. Il melodramma è - anche - uno strumento attraverso il quale si dà voce al corpo, lo si lascia parlare. Oltre che meccanismo narrativo, il melodramma è dunque anche meccanismo di produzione di segni - segni del corpo, innanzi tutto.” Guglielmo Pescatore, *La voce e il corpo: l'opera lirica*, cit., p. 15 (my translation).
- ¹² On the issue of melodrama in Modernist cinema, see also András Bálint Kovács, *Screening Modernism: European Art Cinema, 1950-1980*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2007; and in Italian film, Louis Bayman, *The Operatic and the Everyday in Postwar Italian Film Melodrama*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2014.
- ¹³ Linda Williams, *Melodrama Revisited*, in Nick Browne (ed.), *Refiguring American Film Genre: History and Theory*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1998, p. 51.
- ¹⁴ *Ibidem*.
- ¹⁵ *Idem*, p. 52.
- ¹⁶ “In cinema come in letteratura, il comico raccoglie le *scorie* degli altri generi e non desidera affermare la propria autonomia narrativa ed espressiva” (italics mine). Gian Piero Brunetta, *Cent'anni di cinema italiano: dal 1945 ai giorni nostri*, Laterza, Bari 2006, vol. 2, p. 77 (my translation).
- ¹⁷ “La struttura della commedia prevede un iniziale moto di disintegrazione dell'ambiente originario ed una finale reintegrazione del corpo sociale, nel quale vengono ammessi con formula piena i personaggi che ne erano stati esclusi.” Maurizio Grande elaborates Northrop Frye's formula as expressed in *Anatomy of Criticism*. Maurizio Grande, *Il cinema di Saturno: commedia e malinconia*, Bulzoni, Roma 1992, p. 9 (my translation).
- ¹⁸ On August 28, 1978, the French weekly magazine *L'Express* bears on its cover the title *La comédie à l'italienne*, and declares the success of the “comedy Italian style.” However, French critics had already “discovered” this national comedy in the beginning of the 1970s. On this matter, see Morando Morandini, *Dal 1968 ai giorni nostri: agonia, morte e resurrezione*, in Riccardo Napolitano (ed.), *Commedia all'italiana: angolazioni e controcampi*, Gangemi, Roma 1986, pp. 87-94.
- ¹⁹ Tullio Masoni, Paolo Vecchi, *Degeneri e scostumati: commedia, satira e farsa nel cinema sonoro italiano*, in Riccardo Napolitano (ed.), *Commedia all'italiana: angolazioni e controcampi*, cit., p. 75.
- ²⁰ “Del ‘genere’ la ‘nostra commedia’ ha qualche codice, ma li applica in modo imprevedibile: del ‘genere’ non ha le delimitazioni, le costanze, le iterazioni, i luoghi topici, le strutture permanenti.” Lorenzo Pellizzari, *Dal cinismo al civismo, e ritorno: libera escursione nel cinema “romano” tra eventi, ceti, classi e personaggi*, in Riccardo Napolitano (ed.), *Commedia all'italiana: angolazioni e controcampi*, cit., p. 117 (my translation).
- ²¹ “In pratica, nel giro di poco tempo, la commedia diventa una sorta di grande container per il trasporto di tutti i tipi di materiali e l'assemblaggio di codici e motivi sempre più vasti e complessi.” Gian Piero Brunetta, *Cent'anni di cinema italiano: dal 1945 ai giorni nostri*, cit., p. 426 (my translation).
- ²² “Per quanto riguarda la ‘commedia all'italiana’, essa è diventata un *super-genere* e troverà differenziazioni più chiare. Anche il critico dovrà ridefinire i nostri film inventando catalogazioni diverse.” Ettore Scola as quoted in Roberto Ellero, *Ettore Scola*, La Nuova Italia, Firenze 1988, p. 9 (my translation).
- ²³ See, for instance, to mention only a few, Mariapia Comand, *Commedia all'italiana*, Il Castoro, Milano 2011; Maurizio Grande, *La commedia all'italiana*, Bulzoni, Roma 2002; E. Giacovelli, *Non ci resta che ridere: una storia del cinema comico italiano*, Lindau, Torino 1999; Enrico Giacovelli, *La commedia all'italiana*, Gremese, Roma 1995; Maurizio Grande, *Il cinema di Saturno: commedia e malinconia*, cit.; Riccardo Napolitano (ed.), *Commedia all'italiana: angolazioni e controcampi*, cit.; Masolino D'Amico, *La commedia all'italiana: il cinema comico in Italia dal 1945 al 1975*, Feltrinelli, Milano 1985; Jean A. Gili, *Arrivano i mostri: i volti della commedia italiana*, Cappelli, Bologna 1980.
- ²⁴ “In Italia, in meno di un decennio, si è creato un tipo di umorismo modernissimo, inconfondibile e interamente nostro, con caratteri di assoluta originalità. Noi umoristi ita-

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liani siamo fuori dal binario della comicità francese e da quello del cosiddetto humor inglese e avanziamo da anni su di un terreno del tutto diverso. Il nostro è un tipo di umorismo acceso, sconcertante, fulminante, un umorismo violento che possiede la rarissima qualità di arrivare facilmente sia all'intellettuale che al popolo." Vittorio Metz as cited in Oreste Del Buono, Lietta Tornabuoni (eds.), *Era Cinecittà: vita, morte e miracoli di una fabbrica di film*, Bompiani, Milano 1980, p. 221 (my translation).