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Zavattini's and Lizzani's search for pure realism: Between political engagement and gendered structural violence on (un)real prostitutes

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ABSTRACT

This article is aimed at repositioning *L'amore in città / Love in the City* (1953), and in particular Carlo Lizzani's episode *Amore che si paga / Paid Love*, in the socio-political evolution of post-war Italian cinema, by providing a new reading of this hitherto underestimated work and highlighting its significance. I first present Cesare Zavattini's cinematic project for *L'amore in città* as the ultimate neorealist attempt to resist the legislation of the time regulating Italian film production and provide a credible and viable alternative to mainstream Hollywood productions. I then focus on Lizzani's episode representing prostitutes working on the streets in Rome, analysing the way it reflects typical discourse of the time on women's social roles, in line with patriarchal models of thought. I argue that, while apparently intended to elicit viewers' sympathy for these women, in its approach it serves as an example of patriarchal structural violence on women in the cultural sphere. Finally, by way of a counter-argument, I discuss the significance of Lizzani's episode in the context of political debate on the abolition of brothels in Italy in the early 1950s.

Introduction

In the early 1950s Cesare Zavattini, Riccardo Ghione and Marco Ferreri decided to adopt the *cinegiornale*[1] or newsreel formula to produce documentary-style films as a form of factual reporting of Italian history "as it happens". The first such cinematic project (which was intended to initiate a series of six-monthly productions) – under the banner *Rivista Cinematografica "Lo Spettatore" numero 1* / Cinematographic Review "The Spectator" number 1[2] – was *L'amore in città*, an experimental film released on 26 November 1953 that explored various facets of "love in the city", the city being Rome. The film is structured as a short introduction, in which a voice-over explains the aim and content of this "review in film form", followed by six episodes: Carlo Lizzani's *Amore che si paga* explores street

prostitution; Michelangelo Antonioni examines a number of individuals and their failed suicide attempts in *Tentato suicidio / When Love Fails*; Dino Risi investigates everyday relationships in dance halls in *Paradiso per tre ore / Invitation to Love*; Federico Fellini's *Un'agenzia matrimoniale / Love Cheerfully Arranged* tells of a journalist who pretends to be in search of a wife for a friend in order to enter the world of marriage agencies; *La storia di Caterina / The Love of a Mother* by Francesco Maselli and Zavattini portrays the real-life story of a young unmarried woman from Palermo who, homeless and unemployed in Rome, abandons her baby in a park and then rushes to retrieve him; and Alberto Lattuada, in *Gli italiani si voltano / Italy Turns Around*, provides a critique of male objectification of women by embodying it in a series of short sequences of attractive young women walking the streets of central Rome while men ogle them uninhibitedly. Unfortunately, failure at the box-office – the takings of *L'amore in città* amounted to only 128,600,000 lire (Chiti *et al.* 1991: 34) – meant that this innovative cinematic project was abandoned immediately.

As Lattuada recalled:

> For this project, Zavattini called a group of film directors together and proposed they direct a short film each, with no restrictions, … the freedom to film anything, even a fly buzzing around. But without being paid. We all agreed to work for free in exchange for the total freedom allowed by Zavattini (Giacci 2009: 73).[3]

Conceptually, the entire film was the result of Zavattini's inspiration to develop the idea of *pedinamento cinematografico della realtà* – that is, of following ordinary people as they go about their everyday activities, and representing those activities on film. In that context, the authenticity of the material was required to prevail over the narrative element, in order to open up new possibilities for neorealism, as I shall discuss below. As the voice-over speaker, Arnoldo Foà, explains in the introduction to the film: "All the characters in our investigative report are real people, who will tell you their true stories in their own words".[4] A similar cinematic project had been attempted by Antonioni in his short documentary *N. U. - Nettezza urbana* (titled simply *N. U.* in English), as early as 1948, "*nettezza urbana*" being rubbish collection.

The significance of *L'amore in città* was highlighted by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (n.d.) who claimed that Zavattini's idea of a cinematic review prefigured *cinéma vérité* because of the nature of the project: not a newsreel, nor a fictional film, but a medley of fiction and documentary with items taken from, or recreating, life as it is lived. Nowell-Smith also suggested that, if Zavattini's project failed, it was because it was ahead of its time, and what the filmmakers wanted to do could not be done without the lightweight technology that was to make *cinéma vérité* possible in the 1960s. Indeed, Zavattini's intention was to create a new style, close to *cinéma vérité*, which he called *film inchiesta* – investigation film.

Some other critics did not see this project as making a significant contribution to the post-war Italian cinematic context. For example, Peter Bondanella and Federico Pacchioni (2017) point out that Zavattini seemed to have considered *L'amore in città* a form of factual reporting, potentially based solely on the *purity* of realism – in the form of *pedinamento cinematografico della realtà*. They see it as evident, however, that the other six directors "did

not accept his facile assumption that description or information would automatically lead to interpretation, understanding, and a more profound sense of reality of Italian life" (131). Furthermore, Bondanella and Pacchioni claim that *L'amore in città* can be seen as an example of how far removed Italian cinema actually was from Zavattini's guiding principles, because, in practice, the six directors did not adhere closely to them. Thus, rather than standing out from Italian films of the time and providing an alternative cinematic inspiration, it demonstrated that Italian filmmaking had moved closer to mainstream commercial Hollywood genres (129-131). Bondanella and Pacchioni conclude that

> little can be learned from the film about unwed mothers, prostitution, suicide, or the "reality" of love in Italy or elsewhere, and its use of actual locations, actual people, actual stories leads the viewer no farther than the compilation of facts in the daily newspaper (131).

However, by shifting the perspective to the socio-economic and political framework, and its influence on the way in which Italian cinema was evolving in the post-war period, my analysis will call into question Bondanella's and Pacchioni's conclusion on Zavattini's project. I will proceed by discussing *L'amore in città* as an example of a neorealist attempt to resist the legislation regulating Italian film production of the time, by maintaining a critical eye on social issues and a focus on real people telling real stories, in the hope of providing a credible and viable alternative to Hollywood productions. I will then focus on Lizzani's episode and its socio-political significance in context, with particular consideration of its reflection of patriarchal structural violence and its relationship to senator Lina Merlin's campaign to abolish brothels in Italy in the 1950s.

Pure **realism as a form of political resistance**

As Dennis Broe explains (2014: 121-122), with the left-wing parties' participation in government, the immediate post-war period (1945-1948) was a moment of opportunity to push for major social change in Italy. This was reflected in various attempts by Italian filmmakers to tackle social issues, and specifically crime, in their works – for example Lattuada's *Il bandito / The Bandit* (1946), Giorgio Ferroni's *Tombolo, paradiso nero / Tombolo, Black Paradise* (1947) and Giuseppe De Santis's *Caccia tragica / Tragic Pursuit* (1947) and *Riso amaro / Bitter Rice* (1949). At the time, the mode of film production in Italy was similar to that of France in the pre-war period, being mainly characterised by an artisanal and collaborative *modus operandi* promoted by small production companies (Forgacs & Gundle 2007: 127). As the undersecretary in charge of entertainment in 1949, Giulio Andreotti established import limits and screen quotas, and provided loans to Italian production firms in an attempt to prevent American productions from dominating the Italian market. However, under the influence of US institutions, Hollywood and the Roman Catholic Church, Andreotti also expressed concern about a supposedly negative effect on audiences of frequent images of poverty, unemployment and crime in neorealist films, and urged Italian directors to embrace what he considered a more optimistic, healthy and constructive attitude (Andreotti 1952; Landy 2000: 325).

Broe (2014: 124) claims that, by downplaying the importance of the artisanal mode of production that had developed around Italian films concerned with social issues, Andreotti's

cinema law (Ministero di Grazia e Giustizia 1949) prompted its replacement with a more industrial mode of production consistent with advanced capitalism.[5] Furthermore, as Daniela Treveri Gennari (2009) discusses, an association between the Hays Code (the Motion Picture Production Code which set out guidelines for film content in the United States), Pope Pius XII's speeches on cinema (Pacelli 1955) and the Italian state intervention can be found in their joint attempt to set out the "moral standards" for Italian film production and its technical and artistic characteristics in the immediate post-war period.[6] In other words, the shift in the cinematic production model resulted in the dilution of the socially critical propensity of the neorealist movement and a more conventional Italian film industry essentially inspired by the Hollywood model. The value of a film was no longer expressed in terms of its narrative and social content but in the visual appeal of the spectacle. This transition entailed, for example, the gradual replacement of neorealist working-class icons such as Anna Magnani with young and up-and-coming actors such as Gina Lollobrigida and Sophia Loren.

From the early 1940s to the mid-1950s, Broe (2014: 125) identifies various stages of cinematic responses to the political repression and associated film censorship in Italy. In particular, the final phase of this cinematic resistance includes those films addressing social issues that were produced in the early and mid-1950s – hence the relevance of Zavattini's project, which, as Lizzani explained, "aimed at establishing the legitimacy … of a 'neorealist laboratory'"[7] (Lizzani & Chiti 1982: 181). Lizzani further described the objective of the project as "to promote a new type of cinema which moved forward from neorealism to a *real* realism based on factual stories of the time" (181).[89] As such, I argue, *L'amore in città* should be seen as an attempt to make neorealism approach *pure* realism, so that the mode of production that had developed around neorealism could extend its stylistic boundaries while maintaining its critical eye on society, in the hope of providing a credible and viable alternative to the Hollywood mode of production.

The purpose of *L'amore in città* is made explicit in the first part, the Introduction. In this segment the journalistic elements and the *cinegiornale* tools play a crucial role in the work of visually representing the immediacy of social issues such as street prostitution and attempted suicide that were generally poorly reported in the newspapers of the period. By "journalistic elements" and "*cinegiornale* tools" I refer, for example, to: the name of the project, given as "Cinematographic Review"; the layout of the review's contents, which appear on screen on a crumpled sheet of paper in the background; the use of the page-turning effect as the contents of the review are revealed; and the constant voice-over comments. In the Introduction a series of fixed shots closely linked to the voice-over comments are employed in order to emphasise the power of images on the big screen and offer the viewer a visually novel newspaper-reading experience. Specifically, the voice-over contextualises this cinematic project as being in stark contrast to the industrialised and glossy Hollywood productions, by comparing the way in which the various aspects of love – the main topic of this first issue of the review – are represented. First, a series of stills of American film actors and posters of the period provide the visual component for the viewer, while the voice-over says "Not the kind of love you often see on the screen performed by strapping men like Kirk Douglas … a glossy kind of love, edited, touched up and scripted".[10] These initial glamorised images are quickly replaced by a series of realistic short sequences during which 10 couples are introduced by the voice-over – "The characters in our review are not actors but ordinary people of this big city"[11] – and then filmed during ordinary short conversations reflecting

what the voice-over defines as the three main temporal phases of love: "anticipation, encounters and farewell".[12] For each conversation, precise details are given of the real location and time at which it takes place.[13]

The contrast between the artificial shots of American film actors and posters and the subsequent realistic short sequences of the 10 Roman couples, accompanied by the voice-over commentary, explicitly puts Zavattini's project in contrast with the American competitors. This serves to illustrate the significance of the project in the socio-political context of the time: an attempt to face the challenge posed by the industrial mode of film production, which, as argued above, the 1949 Andreotti Law fostered in post-war Italy. This argument is all the more valid if we compare *L'amore in città* with *Roman Holiday*, a Hollywood production directed by William Wyler which was also released in 1953, and the way in which these two films adopted completely different approaches to their portrayal of Rome. While *L'amore in città* focused on social issues through factual events, with explicit references to the poorer social classes and more neglected areas of the city, *Roman Holiday* "reversed the neorealist and noir trend … [and] re-emphasized the Italian city as middle- and upper-class touristic paradise, in a 'runaway' mode of production nicknamed Hollywood on the Tiber" (Broe 2014: 122). In other words, *L'amore in città* offered an alternative cinematic style inspired by Zavattini's intention to develop a new artisanal mode of production based on the neorealist experience. This is also emphasised in the final segment of the film when the closing credits appear as the voice-over speaker concludes:

> Our review has sought to explore the most intimate and authentic dimensions of the real world, and to do so in the style of and with the objectives of a new and socially conscious kind of cinema.[14]

More importantly, the project sought to maintain the critical impulse which had accompanied the social consciousness of neorealist cinema, despite Andreotti's call for more optimistic Italian films. Indeed, the social and political significance of this film and the context in which it was produced are essential aspects in my analysis because, as we shall see, they support an alternative critical reading of this hitherto underestimated work. However, since an in-depth analysis of all the episodes of *L'amore in città* is beyond the remit of this article, my analysis now focuses on Lizzani's episode, *Amore che si paga*, which provides an effective and interesting case study given its main theme: post-war female prostitution. In the remainder of this article, I will discuss Lizzani's episode in the context of patriarchal structural violence in the post-war cultural sphere.

Lizzani's *Amore che si paga*: a portrayal of (un)real prostitutes as "borderline"

Lizzani's episode focuses on female prostitution on the streets of Rome. An invisible interviewer follows potential interviewees as they work along the embankments of the Tiber, on trams, in bars, and on streets in the centre and outlying districts, and then interviews some of them. In line with the nature of Zavattini's project, Lizzani observed first-hand the social issue he wanted to represent by going onto the streets of Rome and following (allegedly) *real* prostitutes during their usual activities. This should have allowed the director to provide an extremely accurate and *pure realist* portrayal of the protagonists and the locations and times of their activities. However, despite Lizzani's attention to providing accurate details

regarding the locations and timeframes of the operation of female prostitution on the streets of Rome at the time,[15] the realist ambition of this docufiction is compromised by asynchronous dubbing, the seemingly uncomplicated soundtrack and lighting, and the highly organised cinematography and editing of the interviews. Furthermore, Lizzani's DVD commentary (Zavattini 2006) reveals that some of the prostitutes were not prostitutes but actors.[16]

For Danielle Hipkins (2016), by placing some emphasis on this particular aspect, Lizzani implies (perhaps unintentionally) an association between prostitutes and female actors. She points out that Lizzani thus repeats a familiar cinematic pattern of the period; that is, the stigmatising of the female prostitute figure in Italian post-war cinema through her recurrent representation in a "borderline" identity, which indicates the state of being caught between different positions (188). Hipkins used the term "borderline" in her examination of the figure of the female prostitute in Italian national cinema, a figure used, she argued, "to establish, but also to destabilize, the hegemony of respectable femininities, almost entirely premised as they are on a certain kind of sexual behaviour" (10). When the line between the positions of the prostitute and the female actor becomes blurred, these actors become labelled as prostitutes and serve as negative models of women's behaviour in the public sphere – models that justify the monitoring of all women's behaviour, and against which all women's behaviour is compared. They become scapegoats for all women (188-190).[17]

On one hand, as those women are the protagonists of Lizzani's short docufilm, they provide viewers with a direct link to the particular context that Lizzani is interested in exploring. Consequently, viewers gain access to that socio-historical world through their *realist* accounts, and to their subjective point of view. This potentially encourages viewers to identify with their position. On the other hand, the protagonists' *female* point of view is compromised, to a large extent, by the *male* voice-over – which is paternalistic not only in its tone but the words employed to narrate the story, including "*vergogne notturne*" [the shameful nocturnal events], "*decadenza fisica*" [physical decline] and "*reietti*" [outcasts] – and by the fictional reconstruction of the interviews and the director's DVD commentary, which crucially contradict the very essence of Zavattini's concept of *pedinamento cinematografico della realtà* and decidedly emphasise the weak psychological and social condition of the interviewees.[18]

Both Carr (2015) and Hipkins (2016: 188-189) have discussed the ways in which Lizzani likens these women to children. For example, he uses the word "*infantile*" in his DVD commentary (Zavattini 2006) to describe Anna, whose ex-lover has fled with her life savings. The scene takes place in Anna's room and, as she explains her difficult living conditions, she shows an enormous doll on which she has spent most of her savings. Carr points out that the director's commentary suggests "there is a degree of immaturity in [these women's] hobbies and their occasional naïveté" (2015: 123). Hipkins also finds this suggestion in the filming itself, claiming that "these women suffer, the visual implies, from arrested development; they are infantile" (2016: 188). Both the borderline identity – prostitutes/female-actors – and the male judgement apparent in the way the stories of these women are told or commented by the director suggest that Lizzani's episode reflects an "inability to conceive of women's stories as actually worth telling on their own terms [but] as always requiring male judgement and 'beautifying' intervention" (189).

In addition to this, Lizzani's episode, I argue, seems to originate to a large extent in the traumatic consequences of post-war structural violence on women. Although the term "structural violence" – coined by Johan Galtung (1969: 167-191) – generally refers to any form of violence in which some social structure or institution can harm people by preventing them from having their needs met, in the context of this analysis, I refer specifically to the reduced quality of life in which women's potential is diminished.[19] Within this framework, Lizzani's episode, and Zavattini's project in more general terms – if we also consider Lattuada's demeaning rendering of female characters in his episode *Gli italiani si voltano* as discussed by Hipkins (2016: 189) and Carr (2015: 124-125) – represent examples of responses to patriarchal anxiety about women's social roles and female sexuality: responses aimed at containing women in the face of their changing roles in the public sphere.[20] From a socio-political point of view, the emphasis on the borderline state and unstable psychological condition of the interviewees allows Lizzani to provide a narrative world which essentially works to contain the perceived threat of female independence and reinforces existing gender identities and social roles. I read this episode as a reflection of the gendered structural violence inflicted by Italy's experience of the post-war period, during which vulnerable social groups, such as women, were offered the possibility to ascend the social ladder. In other words, the strategy of containment employed by Lizzani in his representation of female prostitution on the streets of Rome reflects the symptomatic reaction in the psyche of the dominant patriarchal class, which aimed to repress, contain and dominate the threatening consequences of that crucial historical period – that is, the possibility for women to gain the socio-economic and political power that would allow them to rapidly attain a certain degree of emancipation.

However, as Hipkins points out, Lizzani's episode "is surely an attempt to generate public sympathy for these women" (2016: 188-189). My discussion builds upon this counter-argument and aims at emphasising the episode's significance in the post-war political debate on prostitution. My analysis takes into account the ethical and critical element of the documentary format, which, as we shall see, facilitates Lizzani's departure from Zavattini's guidelines for this cinematic project. Lizzani's attempt to generate public sympathy for these women and to embed a political subtext into his episode was to some extent encouraged by the high degree of thematic and semantic freedom of documentaries and short films.[21] This freedom was somewhat instrumental in allowing the release of what the Italian authorities perceived as a particularly provocative documentary, especially if we take into account that the Italian government censored Lizzani's *Amore che si paga* from the original American and French versions of *L'amore in città* because it revealed that prostitution existed in Italy (Bondanella 1983: 101). As fictionalised as its characters and reconstruction of the events may seem, Lizzani's episode is underpinned by the ethical function of the documentary genre, and the potential freedom it allows writers and directors to interpret and dramatise issues and their implications for society.[22] As we shall see, the stylistic combination adopted by Lizzani – the use of *fictional* cinematic elements in the *realist* reconstruction of the interviews – is fundamental to providing the viewer with an interpretation of reality, and this highlights the limitations of Zavattini's intention to reach the purity of realism. It also illustrates Bondanella and Pacchioni's (2017) point that Lizzani – as well as the other directors involved in this project – did not accept Zavattini's assumption that pure realism

"would automatically lead to interpretation, understanding, and a more profound sense of reality of Italian life" (131).

This point deserves some additional discussion because, by breaking Zavattini's guidelines and dramatising the way in which certain interviews are reconstructed, Lizzani's episode potentially acquires a political meaning in relation to the debate about the abolition of brothels in Italy, which went on for 10 years. Lina Merlin, a senator for the Italian Socialist Party, began her abolitionist campaign in 1948, following in the footsteps of Marthe Richard, who had the bordellos in France closed down in 1946. The senator's campaign led to what is known as the Merlin Law, enacted in 1958. By signing the 1949 United Nations' Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others,[23] Italy had agreed to bring its legislation into alignment with the international obligations expressed in this convention. The convention expressly prohibited the establishment of brothels and advocated punishment of anyone involved in keeping, financing, managing, or renting a building for the purposes of prostitution. In other words, allowing the continued operation of brothels in Italy would have been incompatible with its international commitments (Aghatise 2004: 1143). This provided considerable momentum for the campaign promoted by Merlin, whose primary aim was to abolish brothels and illegal prostitution in order to free prostitutes from what she argued was a subtle form of slavery.

However, as Hipkins (2007) discusses, the Christian Democrats diverted Merlin's campaign by drawing on Catholic values to emphasise the lack of morality of the prostitutes themselves, and their symbolic collective guilt for the failure of post-war Italian patriarchal society, rather than condemning those who actually exploited them. In Hipkins's words:

> In a Catholic society, the prostitute as a symbol of the sexual act outside the matrimonial bond is always already symbolically associated with guilt, so she is an appropriate bearer of guilt about anything else…. The female prostitute functions … as a failure to repress a collective sense of guilt (87).

In this context, it is interesting to analyse how Lizzani's treatment of some of the interviewees' poignant stories arguably attempts to ascertain who should be held responsible for the prostitutes' social conditions, implicating the patriarchal Italian society as guilty. During the interviews, most of the questions are intentionally simple and seemingly banal, such as: "How many coffees do you drink?", "How many hours of sleep do you get each night?" and "Do you prefer open or closed shoes?".[24] However, as ordinary or even prosaic as the interviewer's questions may seem, the answers to those questions shed light on the lives of the interviewees, allowing their personal stories to emerge. Here, the use of fictional and dramatised cinematic elements in the reconstruction of the interviews turns out to be a crucial element in providing the viewer with a political, or socially critical, interpretation of these interviews. For example, in the middle of the interview with a woman called Tilde, Lizzani introduces a seemingly accidental but significant element. An off-screen unknown man suddenly shouts "Tilde!" and, as she turns to see who is calling her, the interviewer asks "Who is that? Do you know him?".[25] Tilde then explains that he is a man she has just met, who has offered her a job in show business. Here, the blurred line between the prostitute and the actor is once again emphasised and the viewer is implicitly informed of the way young women can be recruited as prostitutes by offering them the possibility of a career in show

business. Whilst the client is a crucially missing character in Lizzani's portrayal of prostitution (Hipkins 2016: 188), this sequence puts the role of the *male* pimp in the spotlight. This point is also emphasised by the voice-over comments as the interview with Tilde is introduced:

> Women like Jolanda and Vallì can be found by going to certain bars, where they are regulars. In these bars, many of those individuals whose role tends to be defined as "friend" or, ironically, "*protector*" [emphasis added], spend long periods of time, *protected* [emphasis added] from the cold and from risk.[26]

By exposing the role of male pimps in this context, this episode acquires a political meaning in the debate about the abolition of brothels in Italy at the time. That is, it draws the viewer's attention to the implications of women's commodification and exploitation as sexual objects, in line with senator Merlin's battle, which in fact did not aim to prohibit prostitution *per se* but the exploitation of prostitution.

However, it is also true that Tilde's interview fundamentally puts the emphasis on her vulnerability. We see her hands shake, for example, and her borderline identity between prostitute and actor implies the opportunity for men to manipulate and exploit her in both roles. The fact that the man Tilde has just met has offered her a job in show business is vital because it highlights the prostitute/actor borderline status, providing support for my argument that Lizzani's episode should be seen as an example of post-war patriarchal structural violence. This is all the more evident if we consider that this short docufilm shares a plot element with many post-war Italian feature films: that of a prostitute in need of a hero to redeem her.[27] As the interview with Tilde progresses, the interviewer's questions become more direct and intimate, focused on asking who helps or supports her. Her answers reveal that she is an unmarried mother, the child's father has left her, her parents are dead, she does not have enough money to keep the baby with her, she has nobody to stay with and, as a consequence, has turned to street prostitution. This element emerges even more explicitly in the final interview, with Liliana, a 21-year-old who has moved to Rome to find a job because her father has turned her out of home on discovering that she is pregnant and her boyfriend had abandoned her. The voice-over then explains that she lives in a shanty town on the fringes of Rome, and that she started working on the street as a prostitute only recently, after attempting suicide. In the final sequence of the episode, the voice-over comments that many women like Liliana could be saved by true love – in other words, by men. Meanwhile, the visual element is provided by the camera cutting from an internal shot of Liliana tucking her baby in, with the window of her shack as the shot frame, to an external fade out on the squalid location on the city's outskirts, accompanied by a dark and melancholy musical score. This is the leitmotif of Lizzani's entire episode: the *male* voice-over explicitly states in a paternalistic tone that all these women have been rejected and abandoned by fathers, brothers, fiancés or boyfriends. As a consequence of this, immersed in poverty and struggling to survive, these women have "fallen" into prostitution and are in need of true love, which essentially means a *male* hero. Although viewers may perceive the interviewees as victims of stories of deception, which indeed emphasises the negative role of the Italian male in the social and, above all, political context of the time, the way in which these interviews are reconstructed diverts the viewers' attention onto the prostitute/actor borderline role and the precarious psychological and social condition of these women estranged from their fathers

and boyfriends. In other words, despite Lizzani's attempt to generate public sympathy for these women, this episode engages in structural violence by reproducing patriarchal models of thought about women's social roles and consequently reinforces the form of patriarchy in which social structures enable men to maintain the inferior position of women in the public sphere.

Conclusion

Lizzani portrays street prostitution in Rome in the early 1950s by combining realist and fictional elements in the reconstruction of interviews with *(un)real* prostitutes. This stylistic combination represents a departure from Zavattini's aim of attaining *pure realism*; the use of fictional cinematic elements in the reconstruction of the interviews was fundamental to providing the viewer with an *interpretation* of reality and to embedding an explicit political subtext into this episode. Lizzani's *Amore che si paga* is, in fact, the fruit of research that uses material based, to a large extent, on reality, but then engages in a process of selection and alteration, which inevitably involves a certain degree of creativity and interpretation. It can be argued, then, that, working from the premise that cinema should have an ethical function and be a source of knowledge and information for the spectator, Zavattini, Lizzani and the other directors involved in this project pursued a new neorealist approach to cinema that entailed representing the real through everyday activities and historical immediacy. Nevertheless, their search for *pure* realism failed, confirming that the power of Italian cinema lay in its critical approach to reality, which could not be reached by a *pure* scrutiny of the real.

More significantly, this article has demonstrated that, nearly 70 years after its release, *L'amore in città* deserves a degree of critical re-evaluation as a vain but brave and original attempt within Italian cinema to resist Andreotti's legislation regulating film production in the immediate post-war period. Furthermore, this analysis has illustrated the contrasting significance of Lizzani's episode by discussing it, on one hand, as a reflection of the gendered structural violence of the period in Italy, and, on the other hand, as an attempt to expose the role of *male* pimps, in the context of debate about the abolition of brothels and Lina Merlin's political battle aimed at prohibiting the exploitation of prostitution. By providing a new critical reading of this multi-faceted, distinctive and underestimated work, I have sought to demonstrate that *L'amore in città* should be seen to have greater cinematic significance than has hitherto been ascribed to it.

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NOTES

[1] In Italy the cinematic representation of history "as it happened" became popular in the fascist period with the production of *cinegiornali* LUCE – newsreels produced by the Istituto LUCE. It was common practice for a newsreel to accompany the main feature in cinemas, until the late 1960s. For a thorough account of the history of the Istituto LUCE see Argentieri (1979).

[2] All translations are the author's except for the titles of films and of episodes of *L'amore in città*.

[3] "L'idea del film era questa: si erano convocati alcuni registi, su iniziativa di Zavattini, e si era detto: se volete fare un pezzo di film, senza alcuna restrizione … siete liberi di fare anche il volo di una mosca. Senza essere pagati. E noi ci siamo dichiarati tutti d'accordo. … gratis, come prezzo della libertà".

[4] "Tutti i personaggi della nostra inchiesta, dunque, sono veri e vi racconteranno con la loro vera voce come si è svolta la loro vera storia".

[5] In their discussion of the evolution of Hollywood's mode of production from the 1920s onwards, Bordwell *et al.* explain that the effect of the shift from capitalism to advanced capitalism is usually analysed in terms of "eliminating commercial independent production" (1988: 555).

[6] For an in-depth analysis of the combined interests of the United States, the Italian state and the Catholic

Church in attempting to keep the Italian film industry under control, and their connections with Andreotti's 1949 cinema law, see Treveri Gennari (2009: 36-82) and Broe (2014: 116-145).

[7] "intendeva sancire … la legittimità di un 'laboratorio neorealistico'"

[8] "L'obiettivo del progetto era quello di promuovere un cinema rinnovato che passasse dal neorealismo al realismo vero richiamandosi alla cronaca di quegli anni".

[9] For further details see De Santi (2001: 20-22).

[10] "non [quell'amore] che vedete spesso su questo schermo interpretato da uomini aitanti come Kirk Douglas, … un amore lustro, riveduto, corretto e sceneggiato"

[11] "I personaggi del nostro giornale non sono attori del cinema ma gente della grande città".

[12] "attesa, incontro e commiato"

[13] The locations and times given are: Piazza del Popolo at 5pm; Via Trasimeno, 19 at 7.30am; Trinità dei Monti at 3pm; Officina Gas at 12.10pm; Baretto at 6pm; Lungotevere Sanzio at 4.30pm; Via Gallia at 1pm; Viale dello Stadio at 7.12pm; Corso Morgagni at 10pm; Cinema Savoia at 11.20pm.

[14] "Il nostro giornale ha voluto ricercare solo la realtà più intima e vera, come vuol essere nello stile e negli scopi di un cinema nuovo e cosciente".

[15] The locations and times of filming are: outlying areas (as evening falls); streets near the main station, Stazione Termini (at 9pm); the city centre (at around 10-11pm); a bar (around midnight); empty central streets (between 1am and 2am), although in this sequence the interview takes place partly in the home of one of the prostitutes; and on a tram (at 3am). Finally, Lizzani follows two of the women to their homes, at dawn – one in a squalid, bare room in a big apartment building in an outer suburb, and the other in a small shanty town, a *baraccopoli*, described by Rhodes (2007: 14) as "built onto the side of one of the aqueducts that are found along the Rome-Naples train line, not far from the Via Tuscolana".

[16] It is worth noting that Lizzani's revelation contradicts the episode details provided by Chiti *et al.* in their *Dizionario del cinema italiano*: "int. non professionisti" [non professional actors] (1991: 34). Although none of the interviewees of Lizzani's episode seems to have pursued an acting career, this point has never been fully clarified.

[17] For an in-depth analysis of the representation of prostitution in post-war Italian cinema see Hipkins (2007).

[18] The same points could be made with respect to other episodes of *L'amore in città*. For example, the weak psychological and social condition of women emerges prominently in *La storia di Caterina* through the portrayal of the protagonist by Caterina Rigoglioso, the abandoned boy's mother in real life. Furthermore, it can be argued that Zavattini's concept of *pedinamento cinematografico della realtà* is compromised in Lattuada's *Gli italiani si voltano* because, like Lizzani's episode, it features young professional actors such as Ugo Tognazzi, Raimondo Vianello and Giovanna Ralli.

[19] For an extensive analysis of the concept of structural violence see Farmer (2004). For an overview of feminist perspectives on this see Anglin (1998).

[20] For an in-depth analysis of male anxiety in this context see in particular Rocchio (1999) and Hipkins (2007, 2016).

[21] For their discussions of the documentary format see Zavattini (1966: 10) and Lizzani (1969: 412).

[22] Here, a parallel can be drawn with the way the ethical function and potential freedom of documentaries has been highlighted in recent years by, for example, Sabina Guzzanti – who offers a provocative and disturbing look at Italy's democracy through the lens of the aftermath of the L'Aquila earthquake, in *Draquila: l'Italia che trema / Draquila - Italy Trembles* (2010) – or Erik Gandini with his portrayal of Berlusconi's media empire and the ways in which commercial TV has come to subvert and manipulate culture and politics in Italy in *Videocracy - Basta apparire / Videocracy* (2009). Further examples include Gianfranco Rosi's *Sacro GRA* (2013) and *Fuocoammare / Fire at Sea* (2016).

[23] See https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/trafficinpersons.aspx

[24] "Quanti caffè beve? Ogni notte, quante ore dorme? Quanto tempo riposa? Quali [scarpe] preferisce, quelle chiuse o aperte?"

[25] "Chi è quello che ti chiama? Lo conosci?"

[26] "Per trovare le donne come Jolanda, come Vallì bisogna andare in certi bar che abitualmente le ospitano. In questi locali, *protetti* [emphasis added] dal freddo e dal rischio, passano lunghe ore molte di quegli individui che una sommaria qualifica definisce amici o ironicamente *protettori* [emphasis added]".

[27] See, for example, Alberto Lattuada's *Il bandito / The Bandit* (1946) and Giorgio Ferroni's *Tombolo, paradiso nero / Tombolo* (1947).