The image of walking

The aesthetics and politics of cinematic pedestrianism

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Chapter 5

A Pedestrian-Cinema: Reclaiming the Streets in Post-Fascist Italian Cinema

"Reality breaks all the rules, as can be discovered if you walk out with a camera to meet it." – Cesare Zavattini

"When history is made in the streets, the streets tend to move onto the screen." – Siegfried Kracauer

In fascist Italy, "much of the battle for the hearts and minds of Italians took place in the public arena, in the streets and squares of the peninsula's cities."[1] In his article on the restructuring of public spaces under the fascist regime of Benito Mussolini, David Atkinson explains how the streets became key sites where the regime, from its earliest days, articulated its authority. By its final months, the streets and other public spaces were recognised by both local authorities and dissidents as an "incontrovertible sphere of dictatorship." Atkinson mentions, for example, that during the 1943 factory strikes, the workers' leaders decided to confine their resistance to the industrial action within the *walls* of Turin's factories because taking it onto the streets was deemed too dangerous – "pure suicide," in the words of one of the strike's leaders. In turn, Atkinson writes, the local police chief's main concern was to confine the strikers to the factories as private spaces and, above all, to prevent any public demonstrations of dissent:

[1] Diane Yvonne Ghirardo, "Citta Fascista: Surveillance and Spectacle." *Journal of Contemporary History* 31:2 (1996), p. 347.

"maintaining public order and preventing the strikers from getting out onto the streets" was a major concern to sustain the symbolic strength of the regime.[2]

Mastering the streets was a major concern for the Fascist Party from its first days. "I could not forget that I was also Chief of that Party that for three years had fought in the squares and streets of Italy – not only to gain power, but above all for the supreme task and the supreme necessity of infusing into the nation a new spirit," wrote Mussolini.[3] From the urban violence of the *Squadristi* fascist militia to mass demonstrations, rallies and parades, Mussolini and his Fascist Party carried fascism's messages onto the streets in order to gain and maintain public support.[4] The March on Rome (1922), which signified the transfer of prime ministerial power to Mussolini, was a public show of strength of enormous significance. As the regime gained strength, the concern to appropriate public spaces, including the streets where everyday life continued, also escalated.

The working class continued to be a major concern since it was reported to be "the most disdainful of fascism" in police and intelligence reports. In addition to the crackdown on unions, National Afterwork Organisations (OND-Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro) were designed to control workers' leisure activities. Working-class bars were closed in 1927 while and street-side tables were only allowed for fascist socializing in upper-class neighbourhoods. Some working-class neighbourhoods, which were seen as the loci of corrupt moral values, unhygienic conditions and, more importantly, Bolshevism, were demolished entirely. This displaced large numbers of residents, who were sent to the city's outskirts – *Borgate*– cut off from their everyday

[2] David Atkinson, "Totalitarianism and the Street in Fascist Rome." in *Images of the Street: Planning, Identity, and Control in Public Space,* ed. Nicholas Fyfe (London: Routledge, 1998).
[3] Benito Mussolini, *My Autobiography*, trans. R.W.Child (London: Paternoster, 1936), p. 195.
[4] Diane Yvonne Ghirardo, "Citta Fascista: Surveillance and Spectacle." *Journal of Contemporary History* 31:2 (1996), pp. 347-72.

urban space, which broke up communities and created difficulties in finding work. In place of these demolished neighbourhoods, large boulevards were built that were designed to glorify Italy's Roman past and set the stage for fascist parades, ceremonies and other public spectacles.

Women, seen fit only for reproduction and rearing new fascist generations, were confined to the domestic space. They were not supposed to enjoy the freedom of the streets. In 1923, prostitutes were subjected to new regulations before, three years later, *all* prostitutes were evicted from the streets. Public spaces were increasingly marked as the domain of an idealised fascist male: heroic, strong, disciplined and militaristic.

Even jaywalking was outlawed with one-way walking imposed by the police on central Rome's narrow pavements. As one journalist depicted Rome in 1943, "It was forbidden to ride a bicycle, walk on certain pavements, cross certain streets (...) It was dangerous to walk with a parcel under your arm, to appear to be hurrying."[5]

In the face of such appropriation of the streets, Atkinson concludes, the tradition of workers' *sovversivismo* (subversion) retreated to the interior spaces of factories and homes rather than risk the streets. The example of the 1943 Fiat strike is telling because it shows how the streets had become entirely the domain of the fascist dictatorship while resistance was further confined to the private spaces of homes or non-visible spaces such as rooftops, obscure spots under the bridges and basement shops, as evocatively represented in *Roma, Città Aperta* (Roberto Rossellini, 1945).[6]

In this chapter, I will focus on cinematographic articulations of walking in the street in the neorealist cinema of post-fascist Italy. I will analyse how walking functioned as a political tool to reclaim the streets after the fall of Mussolini and Italy's

[5] Paolo Monelli, *Roma 1943* (Turin: Einaudi, 1993), p.284; cited in David Forgacs, "Space, Rhetoric, and the Divided City in *Roma Città Aperta*" in *Roberto Rossellini's Roma, Città Aperta*, ed. Sidney Gottlieb (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 106-130.
[6] Forgacs, ibid.

liberation in 1945, as well as creating a new aesthetics of urban space in cinema. Italian Neorealism, in its resistance to the cultural and aesthetic production of fascism, used wandering as a tool to encounter and represent the everyday life of the oppressed. These wanderings articulated an ethical duty of the artist-intellectual to explore and reflect social reality, and thereby forged a unique cinematic trope: an embodied travelling shot, or a long eye-level, on-the-move take that gave the impression of embodied tailing or following a character, who is similarly usually walking, wandering or rambling.

There is an overwhelmingly rich literature on neorealism's aesthetics of space, ranging across city streets, rural landscapes, urban wastelands, and uninhabited peripheries. However, surprisingly little attention has been given to the neorealist image of walking. André Bazin, for example, writes extensively on the travelling shot but does not specifically dwell on walking in his writings on the Italian school of liberation.[7] Siegfried Kracauer, however, highlights the significance of the street for the cinema of this period: "The street is in the extended sense of the word not only the arena of fleeting impressions and chance encounters but a place where the flow of life is bound to assert itself."[8] He emphasises that, "From *Open City* to *Cabiria*, *The Bicycle Thief* to *La Strada*, [Italian films] are literally soaked in the street world; they not only begin and end in it but are transparent to it throughout."[9] Yet, although Kracauer mentions "permeability," "flow of life" or "encounters" in the urban public spaces of Italian cinema, he does not specifically write about pedestrianism despite its strong presence in all his examples. Probably the most substantial account of wanderers in Italian Neorealism is offered by Gilles Deleuze in the second volume of his treatise on cinema,

[7] See Bert Cardullo, ed., *André Bazin and Italian Neorealism* (London: Continuum, 2011).
[8] Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1960, p. 72.
[9] Ibid, p. 255.

Time-Image.[10] He dwells heavily on the tropes of voyage and wanderers that, according to him, first appeared in post-war Italian cinema. However, he does not establish a sound distinction between the pedestrianism of early neorealist films of the immediate post-fascist period and the modernist cinema of the late 1950s and 1960s. As explain below, the image of walking also changes from the 1940s to the 1960s in Italian cinema before being taken up by the nouvelle vague filmmakers in France. Giuliana Bruno, for example, focuses on examples like Rossellini's *Viaggio in Italia* (1954) to argue for a reconceptualisation of the film viewer as a *voyageuse* instead of a *voyeur*. Exploring the ways in which "travelling *with* motion pictures" is possible, Bruno traces the links between film and travel culture, focusing on images of pedestrianism.[11] However, despite offering an immensely rich survey of visual images across disciplines and history, her analysis lacks any discussion of early neorealist films or how the tropes of voyage changed between the post-fascist to the modern era.

In the theoretical or historical accounts of post-fascist Italian cinema, the neorealist filmmakers' decision to go out onto the street has been explained largely as an ethical duty, sometimes as an economic constraint (e.g. studios had been bombed, destroyed or taken over as shelter by the homeless) or as an aesthetic preference. However, given the previous appropriation of streets and public space in general by fascist rule, going out onto the street was also a political act. In my analysis, I aim to show how a neorealist image of walking came into being as a result of quotidian urban pedestrian practices. I will describe how a realist articulation of post-war urban space in cinema was predominantly a political practice that created neorealist aesthetics. Following David Brancaleone's suggestion to consider neorealism in terms of an

[10] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: Time-Image* (London: Continuum, 2005).
[11] Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture and Film* (New York: Verso, 2007).

"urban cinematic spatial practice, and most significantly, a political one,"[12] I will analyse the neorealist image of walking in light of Henri Lefebvre's theory of urban space. I will take Cesare Zavattini's theory of *pedinamento* as a starting point, from where I will explore the political and aesthetic aspects of a neorealist image of walking. In so doing, I will focus on the *walking-shot* – an embodied long, on-the-move take that shadows wandering characters across urban space.

Pedinamento: Walking as Filmmaking

A highly influential ideologue of neorealism,[13] scriptwriter and director Cesare Zavattini suggested "*pedinare*," the Italian word for stalking or shadowing, as a technique for filmmaking. *Pedinare* in cinema entailed "tailing someone like a detective, not determining what the character does but seeking to find out what is about to ensue."[14] The etymology of the word in Italian suggests "legwork" as it is derived from the Italian word for foot, "piede."[15] It is possible to suggest that the proliferation of images of walking in Italian Neorealism is closely linked to the technique of *pedinamento*, not because all neorealist filmmakers were followers of Zavattini, but because going out onto the street to encounter the everyday life of post-war Italian cities

[12] David Brancaleone, "Framing the Real: Lefebvre and Neo-Realist Cinematic Space as Practice," p. 3.
[13] The term "neorealism" stirred intense debate among the filmmakers and critics in Europe throughout 1940s and 1950s. André Bazin, who wrote extensively on the Italian cinema of those decades, noted that "the word neorealist was thrown like a fishing net over the postwar Italian cinema." For him, "Neorealism as such does not exist." In the face of the diversity of styles within neorealism, Bazin took the concept in his writing as just a departure point to excavate and investigate further deviations and commonalities. In this sense, Bazin's theoretical venture echoes the cinematic venture of Cesare Zavattini, the most influential ideologue of neorealism, who conceived of film as inquiry. Bazin's theoretical explorations of the main veins, aberrations, connections or intersections in neorealism's cinematic universe coincides with Zavattini's wanderings in the city "to excavate reality." In this chapter, following Bazin's theoretical method, I take the term neorealism as a departure point rather than unifying concept that isolates the associated filmmakers as a group.
[14] Christopher Wagstaff, *Italian Neorealist Cinema: An Aesthetic Approach* (Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2007), p. 78.
[15] "Pedinamento" in *Treccani: La Cultura Italiana* <http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/pedinare> Last accessed October 1, 2017.

and creating cinematic tools to articulate these encounters were major concerns for the filmmakers of that era.

As early as 1941, Giuseppe De Santis emphasised the significance of understanding the quotidian elements that shape a character.[16] In 1948, the long-time collaborator of Zavattini, Vittorio De Sica, wrote that the aim of cinema is "to *trace* the 'dramatic' in every-day [sic.] situations, the wonderful in small events."[17] In 1955, Roberto Rossellini stated that "neorealism consisted of following someone with love and watching all his discoveries and impressions", emphasising the importance of waiting before following the characters. As he noted, "The movement of the character determines the movement of the camera."[18] In the face of fascism's domination of public space, neorealist filmmakers understood the significance of space in producing and reproducing subjectivities.

The neorealist vocation to go out onto the streets and gather documentary-like footage of everyday life was largely influenced by the Soviet montage school. It is thus possible to draw connections between Zavattini's *pedinamento* technique and Vertov's theory of "walking as montage," which was explained in the previous chapter. Zavattini's method for filmmaking, that "Reality breaks all the rules, as can be discovered if you walk out with a camera to meet it,"[19] is reminiscent of Vertov's formula: "walk out with a camera." Historical studies of cultural and cinematic exchanges between Italy and Soviet Russia indicate that such an understanding of cinematic realism was probably a direct inspiration.[20] For both perspectives, quotidian

[16] Giuseppe De Santis. "Towards an Italian Landscape", in *Springtime in Italy*, ed. David Overbey (Hamden: Archon Books, 1979), pp. 125-130.
[17] Vittorio De Sica, "Why *Ladri di Biciclette*?", in ibid, p. 87.
[18] Roberto Rossellini, "Ten Years of Cinema," in in ibid, pp. 97-98.
[19] Cesare Zavattini, "Some Ideas on Cinema," *Sight and Sound* 23:2, 1953, p. 58.
[20] See for example Masha Salazkina, "Moscow-Rome-Havana: A Film-Theory Road Map," *October* 139 (Winter 2012), pp. 97-116.

practices contained the kernel of what structures a society, and cinema had the tools to make that kernel visible and intelligible. For Rossellini, "cinema is a microscope, in that it can takes us by the hand and lead us to the discovery of things that eye alone could never perceive (be it close-up, small details, and so on)."[21] Even though post-war Italian filmmakers had a very different conception of montage, cinema as a tool to 'excavate' the everyday life and reveal the 'underlying' truth was common. Bazin links the Italian school of liberation with the Soviet montage school, especially Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Dovzhenko for their search of realism[22] while Masha Salaznika, in her article in *October*, offers a detailed account of Soviet-Italian cinematic exchanges. She finds that, in addition to the large body of translated texts and filmmaking classes at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia by Umberto Barbaro, theoretical polemics centring on the questions of 'what form a revolutionary art should take' and 'what "realism" meant' in the context of progressive art were similar in both Soviet and Italian contexts.[23]

In addition to Vertov and the Soviet School, Lumière filmography was also a common reference point for neorealist filmmakers. In 1950, Luigi Chiarini wrote, "with Italian Neorealism, film returns to its origins," and he pointed to Lumière, emphasising the documentary quality of their films: "The small films made by the brothers Lumière are, in fact, brief and simple documentaries: workers leaving their factories, a train arriving in a station, movement through a city street." For Chiarini, "the return to origins" means that the "screen *again* becomes a mirror of life, caught not naturalistically in its external aspects, but in its concrete dialectic." Abandoning its aberrant storytelling, the cinema now "discovers the reality of its historical fulfilment;

[21] Rossellini, p.100.
[22] André Bazin, "Cinematic Realism and the Italian School of the Liberation" in *André Bazin and Italian Neorealism*, ed. Bert Cardullo, p. 29.
[23] See Salazkina.

it no longer isolates man in the abstract situation of an abstract character, but links him to the ideals, aspirations, and sufferings of a social structure (...) No longer following a mere story, but history, the audience saw life reflected from the screen."[24]

These inspirations from the Lumière view and Soviet montage, especially Vertov, also shed light on the genealogy and transformation of cinematic pedestrianism in line with both social, cultural and political changes, and advances in cinematic tools and techniques. Lumière's aesthetics of flânerie as a tool to observe, record, and exhibit daily life were in many ways inspired from modernity's travel culture, concept of movement and urban rhythm. Vertov's kino-pedestrian as a collective post-human subjectivity that could observe, record, and reveal the truth of daily life was inspired by the communist ideal to educate and provoke the masses towards revolution. Even though their cinematic aesthetics were very different from each other, they looked for the hidden structures of public space on foot with a camera in hand; they formulated their cinematic aesthetics in direct contact everyday urban street life.

Pedinamento from Pre-Filmic to Filmic

As a technique for filmmaking, *pedinamento* consists of two phases: rambling around the city to explore quotidian practices or common people in post-war everyday life (pre-filmic), and re-enacting these explorations for the film with non-professional actors (filmic).[25] Zavattini coined neorealism as a "cinema of enquiry:" "We must leave our rooms and go, in body and mind, to meet other people, to see, and to understand them."[26]

[24] Luigi Chiarini, "A Discourse on Neo-Realism," in *Springtime in Italy: A Reader on Neo-realism*, ed. David Overbey, p. 139-145.
[25] At the pre-filmic phase, going out onto the streets to explore everyday life in the poor neighbourhoods and dwellings of oppressed communities was a key component of neorealism.
[26] Zavattini, p. 60.

Image 1: Cesare Zavattini out for a walk (photo credit: Unknown)

Such inquiry is articulated in early neorealist films as strollers, wanderers, tramps or wandering eye-witnesses to post-war society. In *Ossessione* (Luchino Visconti, 1943), we follow a penniless drifter who becomes increasingly uneasy as he becomes entangled in a love affair at a roadside trattoria. In *Roma, Città Aperta*, we follow Resistance members around obscure corners of the city under the siege and surveillance of German troops. In *Ladri di Biciclette* (Vittorio De Sica, 1948), a father and child are forced to wander the city searching for a stolen bicycle, traversing post-war Rome's diverse neighbourhoods: e.g. the *borgate*, a posh trattoria, a fortune-teller's lodge and an unsafe lower-class district are all part of their spontaneous itinerary. In *Europa '51* (Roberto Rossellini, 1951), Irene frequently wanders around poor neighbourhoods, encounters war-stricken women and children, and observes their

everyday lives up close. In *Umberto D.* (Vittorio De Sica, 1952), we accompany an old vagrant's walk around the city. In all these films, the camera closely haunts the wanderers along the streets as they walk through the city's diverse urban spaces. With the spectral camera shadowing these characters, the pre-filmic pedestrianism of the filmmaker is re-enacted to articulate his encounters with everyday urban life in all its unorganised reality. "The Italian camera", writes André Bazin, is "almost a living part of the operator, instantly in tune with his awareness."[27] The travelling shots that follow these wanderers remain distinctively at the eye-level, which gives them a human presence, and distinguishes neorealist travelling shots from the "god-like character" of their Hollywood counterparts.

Tropes of Voyage and the New Realism

For Gilles Deleuze, the wanderings in Italian Neorealism, which are one instance of what he calls "tropes of voyage,"[28] are linked to the emergence of a new social reality in post-war Europe that is "dispersive" and "lacunary." For Deleuze, *films de bal(l)ade*, or 'walking-films,'[29] articulate this social reality and give birth to a new image, characterised by a dispersive situation and deliberately weak narrative links.[30] The perambulations in Italian Neorealism represent a key stage in the emancipation of cinematic narration from the cause-and-effect logic that is crucial in Hollywood-style

[27] André Bazin, "Cinematic Realism and the Italian School of the Liberation," p. 44.
[28] Coming from the Greek word for "turn" or "way," *trope* indicates a certain movement; hence, its present meaning: "a figurative use of a word or expression" connotes a "turn" in the meaning, "taking way" from one meaning to another, perhaps an aberration. Similarly, Michel de Certeau notes that, in Greece, public buses are called "*metaphorai*" – metaphors being vehicles one takes to get to another meaning. *Tropes of voyage*, therefore, denotes the following: a metaphor, or an image of a journey that is characterised by *difference*. In the later years of neorealism and the time-image, the journey becomes virtual: "Bicycle-less neorealism replaces the last questing movement (the trip) with a specific weight of time operating inside the characters and excavating them from within (the chronicle)"; see Deleuze, *Cinema 2: Time Image*, p. 23.
[29] The word-play could be explained as follows: *balader* in French means taking a walk while 'ballad' is a narrative poem revived by English romantic poets like Coleridge, Wordsworth and Lord Byron.
[30] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (London: Continuum, 2005), p. 214.

narration. Deleuze contends that "the sensory-motor action, or situation, has been replaced by the stroll, the voyage, and the continual return journey."[31]

"The great crisis of the action-image," for Deleuze, starts in Italy:

> [On] the one hand, Italy had at its disposal a cinematographic institution which had escaped fascism relatively successfully, on the other hand it could point to a resistance and a popular life underlying oppression, although one without illusion. To grasp these, all that was necessary was a new type of tale [récit] capable of including the elliptical and the unorganised, as if the cinema had to begin again from zero, questioning afresh all the accepted facts of the American tradition.[32]

Deleuze's brief emphasis on the post-war sociocultural conditions that led the era's filmmakers to imagine this new aesthetics is crucial. It also partially answers his question, "Why Italy first?"[33] For the leading public intellectuals of the time, such as Benedetto Croce, Italy's liberation from fascism was envisioned as a new beginning, an eradication of an aberrant disease, a significant rupture in history.[34] The fall of Mussolini in 1943 and, to some, his killing by the Resistance in 1945 were perceived as representing Italian history's "year zero".[35] Writing on Italian Neorealism in 1948,

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[31] Considered to be the earliest example of neorealism, *Ossessione*, for instance, consists of one such continual journey. The film opens with a view of the road, shot from the windshield of a moving car. Gino is returning from the war but not going anywhere particular. A penniless vagrant, he picks up temporary jobs and is entangled in a love affair in a roadside trattoria, seduced by Giovanna, the wife of the owner, who is also a war veteran. The film analyses the tension between settling forces (owning a business, in this case running a trattoria, getting married into a settled life) and nomadic forces (wandering around, travelling without a destination). The film, in fact, focuses on an interruption to Gino's "continual return journey." The mobility of the main character, Gino, has many similarities with Jean Renoir's migrant protagonist, Toni, the eponymous character of the 1935 film, which is widely cited as an inspiration for neorealism. Visconti worked as an assistant director in *Toni* and Renoir reportedly gave Visconti a copy of the novel from which *Ossessione* was adapted.

[32] Deleuze, *Cinema 1: Movement-Image*, p. 216.

[33] Deleuze, ibid, p. 211.

[34] See also Giuliana Minghelli, *Landscape and Memory in Post-Fascist Italian Film: Cinema Year Zero* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Gian Piero Brunetta, *Storia del Cinema Italiano: Dal Neorealismo al Miracolo Economico, 1945-1959, Vol 3* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 2001). Brunetta's emphasis on neorealism being a regression to the cinema's origins also sheds light on the genealogy of cinematic pedestrianism. It was explained in Chapter Two how walking in the city functioned as a tool to explore and register everyday life for Lumière cinematographers. It was also explained how walking shaped the aesthetics of the Lumière view.

[35] It is worth mentioning that the fall of Mussolini and the decline of fascism was not as rapid as indicated by the term 'year zero' since Mussolini's death was followed by an "uneasy interlude" of 45 days, which included popular demonstrations celebrating the end of fascism, tearing down of all fascist symbols and

André Bazin also remarked that the war was not felt as an interlude in Italy but as the end of an era: "In one sense, Italy is only three years old."[36] Filmmakers of the era also considered Italy's year zero as a pure new beginning for cinema. Rossellini wrote in 1955,[37]

> In 1944, immediately after the war, everything was destroyed in Italy. The cinema was no exception. Almost all the producers had disappeared (...) Therefore one enjoyed an immense liberty; the absence of an organised industry favoured the least routine enterprises and all initiative was good.

Chiarini wrote in 1951 that the position of neorealist filmmakers was "determined in confrontation with the historical and social reality that they were discovering with the camera."[38] Bazin observes that the neorealist aesthetics embodies the potentially revolutionary environment of the year-zero feeling.

A good example of the cinematic aesthetics, which would later be called neorealism, that emerged from this year zero feeling is Antonioni's *Il Gente del Po*. Reflecting the daily life of fishermen who work and live in the Po Valley, this documentary was filmed in 1943 but could not be released until 1947. "Before *People of the Po Valley* in 1943, Italian cinema did not portray the poor lower classes in such a harsh way," says Antonioni in an interview.[39] As part of the strict control of film production under fascist rule (Cinecittà), documentaries were not allowed to show any signs of the daily hardships experienced by the lower classes. Nevertheless, Antonioni risked travelling to the mouth of the Po River to wander or row around, and film the

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inscriptions from the public buildings and monuments, which were met by the king's brutal military crackdown. Furthermore, 1943 to 1945 was tumultuous with occupations, bombardments, mass strikes and insurrections (for further information, see Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943-1988*, (London: Penguin, 1990). Neorealism was born under such social and political conditions.

[36] Bazin, "Cinematic Realism and the Italian School of the Liberation", p. 33.

[37] Rossellini, ibid, p. 93.

[38] Chiarini, ibid, p. 142.

[39] Michelangelo Antonioni, *The Architecture of Vision: Writings and Interviews on Cinema* (USA: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 194.

fishermen's everyday lives, filled with difficulties and challenges. "Our cinema had carefully avoided representing those situations, as the fascist government prohibited them," he states. All the film material was confiscated and kept in a storage northern Italy by the fascists "who had remained faithful to Mussolini." The film was therefore not seen by any audience in 1943. After the war ended, Antonioni tried to get it back but only to discover it in a warehouse, half ruined by the humidity. The surviving part was not released until 1947.

Shot shortly after Antonioni's documentary and also set in the Po Valley, *Ossessione* also faced censorship under fascist rule. The result of a collaboration of co-writers and the director Visconti, all active in the underground communist movement, *Ossessione*, like *Il Gente del Po*, was made under the fascist government with anti-fascist sentiment. Even though the script was passed by the censors, the film was withdrawn from many cinemas or banned audiences below the age of 16 under censorship imposed by local parishes of the Catholic Church and local government officials. According to Forgacs, the writers of the script certainly exercised self-censorship in not making the politics too explicit, hence the central government did not perceive the film as directly anti-fascist in a political sense but rather as immoral – "an attack on the morality and sanctity of the family and marriage." Since these values were also upheld by the fascist regime and crucial for the reproduction of fascist identity, the film faced various forms of censorship after its release and could not find audiences.

Both *Ossessione*, which is widely considered as the precursor of neorealism, and *Il Gente del Po* contain cinematographic elements that later formed the kernel of neorealism, such as portraying the lower classes' daily life, focusing on the micro-actions that contain the crux of reality, travelling with characters and scrutinising the politics hidden in everyday situations. The power of their anti-fascist aesthetics is

evidenced by the various forms of censorship that both films experienced, as outlined above. In that sense, these films, as precursors of neorealist aesthetics, embodied the potentially revolutionary environment during the last days of fascist rule. Thus, if there is any year zero moment for Italian cinema, it could be located in the emergent everyday aesthetics that investigated unrepresented reality.

Below, I will explain the cinematographic articulations of walking in post-fascist European cities as a significant tool to explore, historicise and negotiate the lacunary reality in post-fascist Italy. For Deleuze, it was Rossellini that discovered a dispersive and lacunary reality with *Roma, Città Aperta*, but above all with *Paisà*, "a series of fragmentary, chopped up encounters."[40] I will particularly focus on *Roma, Città Aperta* and *Germania Anno Zero* – the first and the third film in his War Trilogy. The images of walking in these films reveal actual practices of walking in the city yet also give birth to new aesthetic tools. Although also very relevant, *Paisà* includes tropes of voyage that are different to walking. In this film, wandering is abstracted into a narrative technique, the analysis of which is beyond the analytical focus of this chapter.

Instead, I would like to expand my analysis to *Ladri di Biciclette*, which marks a significant stage in neorealism's evolution of the walking-shot. In *Ladri di Biciclette*, cinematic pedestrianism across the city is not a form of resistance, as in *Roma, Città Aperta*, or a freedom to wander across all spaces, as in *Germania Anno Zero*. It is rather a form of perpetual displacement, which articulates the insecure condition of Italy's working class around the 1948 elections, when the Resistance lost power and Christian Democrat rule began.

[40] Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, p. 216.

Walking as Resistance in Roma, Città Aperta

Roma, Città Aperta, filmed and set in Nazi-occupied Rome in 1945, opens with marching soldiers, whose rhythmic footsteps grow louder as they approach from out-of-field before eventually filling the frame. The German military song 'Märkische Heide, Märkischer Sand' dominates the audio field as the static camera pans left to right to follow their movement. We then cut to a military truck entering the frame with a roar from the same point and performing the same movement (Image 2). Through this duplication, the scene demonstrates how the occupiers dominate the streets both on foot and in vehicles. The sounds of marching steps, chanting and roaring vehicle engines symbolise their invasive control over all the city's space.

Image 2: Mobilities of the Oppressor – stills from *Roma, Città Aperta* (Roberto Rossellini, 1945).

The occupier's domination over the city is next represented by an abstract visualisation of the city under invasion (Image 3). On a physical map of Rome, military sectors are marked with black rigid lines and circles, which graphically illustrate the military construction of space, imposed on the city. The heart of the city is marked by a circle that resembles a web – metaphorically connoting the restriction of movement. In his review of the premiere of the film in 1945, Alberto Moravia described the title as "slightly sarcastic," while, in the words of another reviewer, the film reconstructs "the harsh and tragic life lived during the imprisonment of Rome, when the irony of words defined the capital as an 'open city.'"[41]

Image 3: The cobweb city - still from *Roma, Città Aperta* (Roberto Rossellini, 1945).

[41] Cited in Forgacs, p. 128.

The film concerns a Nazi general's attempts to stalk and capture a Resistance leader, Giorgio Manfredi. He boasts of his powers of surveillance over the streets of Rome without ever having to leave his office: "Every night I stroll through Rome without leaving this room," he says. "I am very fond of this kind of photography that captures people almost by surprise. You meet some very interesting people" (Image 4). The camera(man) that strolls the streets functions as an extension of Bergman's body, which is confined to the interior space of the Nazi headquarters for safety reasons. Symbolically, this encapsulates the paradox of Bergman's power: "Bergman's use of photographs epitomises both the intrusive power of his surveillance and its limitations," observes David Forgacs: "the controlling view of the city from above, as seen on a map, or from a distance, as through camera lens, is the key to Bergman's particular form of power, but also its limitation."[42] Thus, Bergman is never seen strolling the streets; on the contrary, he seems confined to his headquarters.

It is possible to observe an almost spectral dimension here. In addition to the camera working as an extension of Bergman's body, enabling him to stroll the streets without being corporeally present, the high contrast of light and imposing shadows of the Nazi headquarters (quoting German expressionist cinematography) symbolise how the occupying troops haunt the city.[43]

[42] Forgacs, p.114.

[43] This spectral dimension of surveillance is further extended with control over the invisible space of "penetrating yet intangible new media" such as telephone, telegram and radio. This has a historical truth behind it as the journalist Paolo Monelli writes that, in 1943, it was forbidden to "wire or telephone outside Rome" while "listening to Radio Bari or Radio Palermo were punishable by death. In the film, the telephone, only found in Nazi headquarters and Marina's bourgeois home, "is a means of hidden communication able to thwart the communications networks of the Resistance," since it was a rarity, only found in upper class households. See Forgacs; and del Pilar Blanco & Peeren, eds., "Introduction: Conceptualizing Spectralities" in *The Spectralities Reader* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 1-23.

Image 4: Virtual flânerie – still from *Roma, Città Aperta* (Roberto Rossellini, 1945).

Besides surveillance, the film articulates the Nazi's domination over urban public space through the obtrusive movement and presence of the commanders, as in the opening scenes. Here, German troops march and sing as part of a public display of their power, noisily drive their trucks, raid buildings and living quarters, or stop citizens at random in street patrols. The ability to move about the streets therefore becomes almost an exclusive privilege of the occupiers, who impose curfews and other restrictions to impede the citizens' movements.

In his article, "Space, Rhetoric, and the Divided City in *Roma, Città Aperta*," David Forgacs counterpoises the macroscopic cartography of the city (seen from above through the occupier's gaze) with the micro-practices of its inhabitants and Resistance activists, i.e. appropriations of space from below by means of walking and other kinds of movement along hidden routes. After the opening sequence, which presents a claustrophobic image of an oppressed city under the gloom of Nazi occupation, these clandestine movements, such as walks, escapes, or hidden travels, start eroding the domination from below.

Adriano Aprà describes this other city in the film as a dispersed or "decentralised" city, in opposition to the centralised city of the authorities.[44] It is also an articulation of the "lacunary" everyday reality of Rome under occupation. Forgacs describes how the action of the film zigzags between various parts of Rome, tracing out both a social geography of the city and a set of symbolic oppositions. The clandestine acts of walking connect all these various parts of Rome: the working-class district of San Lorenzo or the *borgate* as new working-class settlements housing the displaced population after the fascist "gutting" of the city centre.[45] It could be claimed that Rossellini's camera, by shadowing Resistance members along their hidden routes and alleys across the city, testifies to the existence of an alternative social space, decipherable only by members of the Resistance. The militants use all kinds of routes, from rooftops to gutters: Manfredi escapes through a basement; Don Pietro sings "Mattinata Fiorentina" on the street to meet another partisan. For the Germans and the fascists, these are places under their control and surveillance whereas for the Resistance activists, they are places from which or into which they may escape. Rossellini's camera, following them along all these dark street corners, side streets or secret routes, not only records this alternative social space from a documentarian perspective, but also articulates it cinematically using images of walking to interweave them. In the film, walking means resisting the occupier's formation of space, appropriating its production of space and creating an alternative social space.

Regarding the way this alternative social space becomes increasingly visible, Mark Shiel notes that the darkness and oppression of the opening sequence is gradually cancelled out by neorealist light and air. Yet, despite the contrast between the highly-

[44] Adriano Aprà, "Rossellini Beyond Neo-Realism", in *Roberto Rossellini*, ed. Don Ranvaud (London: BFI, 1981), p. 44.
[45] Forgacs, ibid, p. 121.

structured interiors of Nazi headquarters and the breathing images of street, the neorealist flexibility of movement across various spaces is not very strong in this film. The images of walking are not yet extended on-the-move takes, mainly because the characters' movements remain very clandestine and restricted to narrow, dim, obscure and tiny spaces. The streets have not yet been reclaimed by the citizens, partisans or activists. A strong example of this is the scene where Pina is shot dead as she bursts onto the street and runs after her fiancé Francesco, who is being taken away by soldiers. The powerful image of her lying dead on the street with her son crying by her side is not only one of the strongest images in the history of Italian cinema but also a symbol of the domination of public space.

Although the images of walking in *Roma, Città Aperta* are mostly composed of multiple shots and interrupted movement, in tracing this clandestine mobility of Resistance members, the neorealist images of walking gradually loosen the imposed restrictions on space. The film's closing scene, with a group of militant children walking down a hill towards Rome, signals a new construction of space from zero. The affective quality of the image has been transformed: "the city appears no longer as a zone of authoritarian control but as a source of inspiration for people in revolt."[46]

Walking as Historicising in Germania Anno Zero

In a direct reference to the shared history of fascism between Italy and Germany,[47] *Germania Anno Zero* (1948) follows the endless wanderings of a child amidst the ruins of war-stricken Berlin. Rossellini filmed in Berlin in 1947 with special permission, and

[46] Mark Shiel, *Italian Neorealism: Rebuilding the Cinematic City* (London: Wallflower, 2006), p. 52.
[47] Rossellini echoes Benedetto Croce's perspective of Italian fascism as an aberration as he writes, "What was it that could have carried [the Germans] to this disaster? A false philosophy, the essence of Nazism (...)." See Rossellini, ibid, p. 99.

his description of how he arrived in the city sheds light on the condition of public space after the war:[48]

> It was necessary to cross the entire city to get to the French sector. The city was deserted. The grey of the sky flowed back into the streets, and from about the height of a man one could look over fallen roofs. To find the streets again under the ruins, people had cleared away the rubble and piled it up.

Like Rome in *Roma, Città Aperta*, Berlin was under occupation and divided into four occupation sectors: French, British, American, and Russian. Rossellini found that "the four occupying nations were very hospitable and permitted me to wander everywhere."[49] He had the privilege of unimpeded movement across the city, which gave him the opportunity for *pedinamento* – wandering about the city to encounter and film daily life. After this first visit, Rossellini went back to France with some footage to work on the script. He had come to Berlin with a story in mind: to tell the story of a child to show how an innocent being eventually commits a crime under the influence of a Nazi schoolmaster. Echoing Croce's claim that fascism is a disease, Rossellini believes that "a false philosophy" has carried the German to this disaster. The years of Nazism are therefore construed as an aberration in Germany's history. Cinema, for Rossellini, can help discover such "reactions and motives for actions:" "the cinema is also a microscope" and "it is also this microscopic aspect of cinema which has made neorealism; it is a moral approach which becomes an aesthetic fact."[50] In his film, he scrutinises the personalities and the landscape of post-war Berlin through such a microscopic lens, probing into the psychological reasons behind everyday micro-actions. For Rossellini, the kernel of politics at large, which shapes society and history,

[48] Rossellini, ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid, p. 100-101.

becomes visible in these everyday micro-actions. The case of the boy, Edmund, committing a deplorable crime under the influence of a Nazi schoolmaster, perfectly exemplifies this neorealist vocation to follow up close the everyday actions of characters to reveal the politics implicated in them.

In *Germania Anno Zero*, Rossellini's camera closely haunts the little boy along the streets as he walks through diverse urban spaces across the city. In this film, Rossellini devises a walking-shot that is aesthetically different from that in *Roma, Città Aperta*: a long, embodied, eye-level on-the-move take that follows the character wandering about the city or across a landscape. In contrast with *Roma, Città Aperta*, which depicted the gloom of a highly-controlled public space, the streets in *Germania Anno Zero* are relatively open for citizens now that the war is over. The camera can follow little Edmund walking across the city at length without any need to hide from the gaze of occupiers. Therefore, in this film, unlike *Roma, Città Aperta*, the editing is slow: long takes leisurely record the movement of the protagonist and the post-war urban landscape without much interruption. The space is also larger: instead of obscure corners and tight close- or medium-shots, he uses long shots to depict larger landscapes. Following Edmund throughout, Rossellini's camera takes a walk, offering us a snippet of reality from war-stricken everyday life. Rooted in the present and in the local, the camera enters deeper into various spaces, from shabby rooms in a boarding house to the Nazi school teacher's apartment, or evacuated ruins and dark corners inhabited by urchins. With each space visited, we encounter different aspects of everyday life in post-war Berlin. Walking, therefore, functions to weave these diverse urban spaces together without the risk of losing their reality to conventional storytelling. It makes it possible to reflect urban everyday life in all its unorganised reality.

In one of his articles, Bazin refers to the images of Rossellini (and of neorealism generally) as *image-facts*: each image being on its own just a fragment of reality existing before any meanings.[51] Long, on-the-move takes or walking-shots, it could be argued, give Rossellini the aesthetic means to create broader, further extended image-facts without interruption. This accords with Rossellini's understanding of cinema as a microscope: a metaphor for an analysis of what motivates an action in a character. It could be suggested that the walking shot enables such an analysis since, throughout, variations in the camera's distance from its subject (from extreme wide to medium shots) frame the individual within the surrounding historical time and space. The scenes where Edmund's feeble body is almost engrossed by the ominous ruins that pervade the visual field perfectly exemplify this analytical regard of neorealist aesthetics. These scenes testify to neorealism's documentary drive to register historical circumstances and explore the affective relationship between individual and space. Thus, in *Germania Anno Zero*, the walking shots are not only blocs of movement but also blocs of history.[52]

[51] See Bazin, "Cinematic Realism and the Italian School of the Liberation" in Cardullo, pp. 29-51; and "In Defense of Rossellini" in Cardullo, pp. 163-172.
[52] Deleuze refers to Bazin when he first uses the term 'bloc' as an aesthetic component of neorealism. A bloc is an elliptical section of reality, which is construed to have deliberately weak connections to the other sections of reality depicted in the film. See Deleuze, *Cinema 2: Time-Image*.

Image 5: Subject as a fact among others – still from *Germania Anno Zero* (Roberto Rossellini, 1948).

Implicated in this urge to encounter, register, discover and analyse post-war conditions, including human agency, is an attempt to *historicise* those conditions. Neorealism's investigation into the close relationship between the subject and the space was largely inspired by the thinker and political activist, Antonio Gramsci, an influential figure imprisoned by Italy's fascist regime. In *Roma, Città Aperta*, we see a direct reference to Gramsci: Francesco and others run off copies of *L'Unità*, the newspaper that he founded. Neorealist filmmakers were strongly influenced by Gramsci, whose work was banned under fascism but started to be circulated more freely after the fall of Mussolini. Gramsci's concept of hegemony became particularly useful for analysing what induces the widespread practice of and demand for violence in a society. Central to the Gramscian concept of hegemony is the production of consent, which is analysed in his work through the role that institutional practices – such as the Church, schools or forms of entertainment – play in shaping the consent of individuals and groups. Gramsci conceived of social structures as a source of *lived* social relations.

Social practices, therefore, provide the evidence and data to analyse the production of consent and the production of change.[53] Therefore, analysing the everyday practices of social life sheds light on the material conditions that shape subjects. Echoing Marx's image of the dialectical method, "Gramsci's starting point was *the concrete subject situated in a particular historical environment*."[54] The Gramscian method of historicising focuses on such an investigation into the relationship between individuals and their surroundings. Rossellini's neorealist aesthetics, which highlight the conditions in which its characters act, carries the influence of this Gramscian method.

Throughout the walking shots in *Germania Anno Zero*, the variation in the distance of the camera to its subject (from extreme wide to medium shots) frames the individual within the surrounding historical time and space. The gaze of the camera in these embodied walking-shots acts almost as a public intellectual's analytical look (the microscope), zooming in and out from the social reality, observing everyday conditions but pointing to a wider political question regarding the individual's relation to space. The walking shots in this film are thus "the bearer[s] of historicity," as Minghelli puts it.[55] The walking-shot, always rooted in the present and always on the move, probes into the historicity encapsulated in the wider social and physical landscape.

At this point, it is worthwhile mentioning the contestations of public space in Berlin around the time *Germania Anno Zero* was filmed. The literature on the Nazi Party's influence on urban public space and its urban policies is strikingly limited compared to the expansive scholarship on Mussolini's politics of public space. For instance, Bernhard Sauer, in his recent study about the history of the Storm Troopers

[53] Marcia Landy, "Culture and Politics in the Work of Antonio Gramsci." *boundary 2* 14:3 (Spring 1986): The Legacy of Antonio Gramsci, pp. 49-70.
[54] Ibid, p. 54. Marx's metaphor of dialectic materialism, "the actual, corporeal human being standing on firm and well-rounded earth, inhaling and exhaling all natural forces" was analysed in connection with Vertov's cinematic pedestrianism in the previous chapter.
[55] Minghelli, p.10.

(SA) in the Brandenburg district of Berlin, observes that historians have until now paid little attention to National Socialism in Berlin and, above all, to the history of the SA in the city. Brian Ladd notes that, in Berlin, "the Third Reich built mostly government offices, and buildings that displayed the power and authority of the Nazi state had to meet a different standard."[56] Yet, there is still no comprehensive account of the National Socialists' influence on the social space in Berlin, "the very city that had to be subjugated by the party" before it could extend its murderous dictatorship to the remainder of Germany.[57] In fact, Hitler saw Munich as his home, where he had strong support, whereas Berlin needed to be "conquered." Whereas he could address thousands of listeners at one gathering in Munich, the gatherings in Berlin were small and his party was banned while local Berlin newspapers continuously mocked him as a "miniature Mussolini" or "a pitiful street demagogue." When, in 1924, a journal depicted him entering Berlin on horseback, Hitler is said to have responded, "That might still happen," and this is not the only evidence that Hitler envisioned conquering Berlin. His bodyguard, Ulrich Graf, recalled Hitler pointing to Berlin and saying, "When our swastika flag flies over these wonderful buildings, I shall be the leader of our whole nation."[58] By 1923, shortly after Mussolini's March on Rome in 1922, Hitler was already preparing for a March on Berlin, although this was later abandoned. Friedrich mentions that "following the National Socialists' assumption of power, Berlin had been 'occupied by brown-shirted provincials', implying that the local variant of National Socialism, far from emerging from within the city itself, had somehow been imposed on it from the outside."[59] Therefore, "the twelve years of National Socialism

[56] Brian Ladd, *Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), p. 141.
[57] Thomas Friedrich, *Hitler's Berlin: Abused City*, trans. Stewart Spencer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), p. x.
[58] Ibid, p. 49.
[59] Ibid, p. xi.

represent not just an episode in its history but also a break in its more authentic past."[60] From this perspective, the shared memory of authoritarian and nationalistic rule, occupation and liberation brings Berlin and Rome closer to each other. Strong evidence for such a shared memory can be found in the description of liberation in both countries: while the ultimate fall of Mussolini in 1945 is construed as "the year zero" in Italy, May 1945 is envisioned as "Stunde Null" (the zero hour) in Germany's history. Despite substantial differences between the particular experiences of war in the two cities, various historical moments permit such a parallelism to a certain extent. For example, it is known that Hitler looked up to Mussolini as a leader while the two corresponded with each other often. In 1937, Mussolini's visit to Berlin left a mark on Berlin's history as an unprecedented display, as much as Hitler's visit to Rome. In 1943, The Nazi Party occupied Rome to save Mussolini. Although few studies have analysed the influence of Nazism on public space, it is still possible to draw such connections of shared memory and traumas of war between Rome and Berlin, and also with regard to Rossellini's neorealist treatment of Berlin.

In his seminal essay, "The Voids of Berlin," Andreas Huyssen claims that the notion of Berlin as a void after the war is more than a metaphor due to the city's discontinuous and ruptured history. After the Allies occupied Berlin, May 1945 was envisioned as a 'Stunde Null' – the zero hour – with the ruins becoming the actual sites, images, symbols and memoranda of it. Huyssen notes that forgetting is a significant part of rebuilding the city, and he even sees this discourse carried into the present:

> It has been equally privileged in an official ad campaign of 1996, literally written all over the city: 'Berlin wird' (Berlin becomes). Becomes what? Instead of a proper predicate, we get a verbal void.[61]

[60] ibid.
[61] Andreas Huyssen, "The Voids of Berlin", *Critical Inquiry* 24:1 (Autumn 1997), pp. 57-81.

The will to erase the Nazi past through forgetting leaves behind a void in both history and in the public space. In Rossellini's film, such erasure from the public space is strongly represented through Edmund's brother-in-law: Karl-Heinz. An ex-Nazi soldier, Karl-Heinz is enclosed within the private space of his living quarters – he cannot go out to the streets for fear of getting caught. Comparing his confinement with Bergman's in *Roma, Città Aperta*, Karl-Heinz is deprived of his powers. In contrast to Bergman's extended 'spectral' presence in the public space through surveillance, Karl-Heinz's existence is reduced to zero, a void.[62]

In *Germania Anno Zero*, it is also possible to see a contrast between Karl-Heinz and Edmund. With the former refusing to work, Edmund fills the void left by his retreat from the social space. However, it could be claimed that Edmund also represents a void, remembering Rossellini's emphasis on his innocence. Edmund is shaped by the emergent social space in the post-war city as much as he partakes in the production of this social space through his quotidian activities. Therefore, the ruinous urban landscape, as much as being an image of the void of "the zero hour", is also a site of the production of a new space.[63] Rossellini's film, reminiscent of Gramscian analysis, records this emerging social space at the level of everyday life through the wanderings of Edmund, with a special attention to his surroundings that affect his actions. From this perspective, Edmund, as Bazin has noted, becomes one fact among others.

Even though 1945 was envisioned as Stunde Null, which implied a new start out of the rubble, Brian Ladd explains that it was more a hope than a fact. As he notes,

[62] Brian Ladd notes that the reformist impulse was powerfully reinforced by the widespread desire to suppress all possible links to the capital of the Third Reich, whether that desire was motivated by revulsion at the Nazis or by a sense of guilt; See Ladd, p. 176.

[63] From this perspective, the urban landscape of Berlin could be described as a 'holey space', to use Deleuze and Guattari's concept from *A Thousand Plateaus*. The power structures of the past are already in ruins and a new social space is being constructed through the lived quotidian practices of the citizens.

"the desire to break with the past is most evident in the first and most ambitious of the immediate postwar plans." Ladd explains the immediate post-war period as follows:

> In the municipal government set up in 1945 under Soviet auspices, which comprised a broad coalition of antifascists, the prominent architect Hans Scharoun took charge of building and planning. He gathered a group of architects and planners whose "collective plan" of 1946 applied principles of urban modernism to the design of Berlin. For these planners, the destruction of the war offered the opportunity to cast off the shackles of the past and to create a new city adapted to the natural landscape of the Spree River valley in place of the haphazard historical accumulation of streets and buildings. The planners sought a decentralization and functional division of the city. (…) The "collective plan's" visionary urban design was intended to be democratic rather than hierarchical and thus to break with the German past in politics as well as planning.

However, the "collective plan" remained on paper and ultimately forgotten, especially following the division of the city into two and the building of the Berlin Wall. With new political actors exerting their domination over the public space in the emerging Cold War, the meaning of cinematic pedestrianism was transformed once again with post-war Europe's changing everyday landscape and spatial practices. The images of walking in *Ladri di Biciclette* evocatively portray the conditions of the working class during such a shift in politics.

Walking as Displacement in Ladri di Biciclette

A collaboration between Cesare Zavattini and Vittorio de Sica, *Ladri di Biciclette* contains all phases of the *pedinamento* technique. In preparation for the screenplay, the film crew, headed by de Sica and Zavattini, took several walks across Rome to observe the daily life of the city's working class. In these pre-filmic perambulations, the crew visited a charitable service for the poorest citizens, the Church of Saints Nereo and Achilleo, where they – just as Antonio and Bruno – stumbled upon a weekly mass

shaving before the service. Having observed "the beliefs of the working class," they decided to visit a fortune teller. During these visits, Zavattini listened carefully to the problems expressed by the working-class visitors and even sometimes pretended to be one of the advice-seekers.[64] All these encounters not only provided snippets of Roman everyday life but also shaped the film's itinerary. In other words, Antonio and Bruno's perambulations in the film itself are reenactments of Zavattini and de Sica's pre-filmic *pedinamento* across Roman spaces to observe working-class everyday life.

Zavattini and de Sica made most of these walks in the winter of 1947 and the first months of 1948. The script was completed in April 1948, shortly after the elections, which were seen as a "watershed in the history of Italy." The filming took place in the spring, "after witnessing the marginalization of the very forces that earned Italy, emerging from the ruins of fascism."[65] The film was released in the same year.

1948 was a defining moment for the new-born republic and for fledgling Cold War geopolitics. Unemployment peaked, a veritable boom of miracles was reported to Vatican and fierce political and ideological confrontations took place. Whereas the Christian Democrats and the United States[66] focused on the employing classes, the Communists, backed by the Soviet Union, focused on the working-class movement.[67] According to Andrea di Michele, 1943-1947 was a transition phase independent of both the preceding fascist period and the following Republican era. In many ways, 1948 was also the end of the revolutionary season that began in 1943. As Paul Ginsborg put it, a

[64] See Minghelli, p. 93.
[65] Minghelli, p. 95.
[66] Ginsborg writes that the American intervention was breath-taking in its size, with an "Interim Aid" package of 176 million dollars in the first three months of 1948. The arrival of aid was turned into a special celebration, with ships and trains welcomed by crowds. On 20 March 1948, George Marshall, the designer of the Marshall Plan, explicitly warned that all help to Italy would immediately cease in the event of a Communist victory.
[67] Ginsborg, p. 72; On 17 March, Cardinal Spellman, in the presence of President Truman, declared: "And one month from tomorrow as Italy must make her choice of government, I cannot believe that the Italian people … will chose Stalinism against God, Soviet Russia against America."

"restoration" era commenced in 1948, through which power was restored to the dominant classes. Minghelli argues that a feeling of defeat must have weighed oppressively on *Ladri di Biciclette*, which would be the expression of a new cinema. "It is in such an atmosphere of disenchantment and defeat that the film was shot," observes Minghelli.

Such a feeling of defeat finds expression in *Ladri di Biciclette* in many ways, but most significantly in the walking shot. Most of the cinematic pedestrianism in the film is based on one lost object – the stolen bicycle, which can be considered to symbolise the Marxian concept of the means of production, the thievery of which implies the dispossession of the working class in the rising anti-communist and anti-socialist political sentiment of the time. Minghelli also observes that the bicycle is "a basic tool granting a livelihood to an unemployed worker." From this perspective, it is possible to read the film as representing the struggle for abducted power, evoking Paul Ginsborg's identification of the era as one that restored power to the employing classes. However, *Ladri di Biciclette* is not entirely defeatist since the bicycle is in a "suspended state of presence/absence," as Minghelli notes:

> The bike is there (he does own one) and it's not there (it is at the pawn shop). "Ce l'ho e non ce l'ho" (I have it and I don't have it) declares Antonio to the employment agent (…) "O la trovi subito o non la trovi più" (Either you find it now, or you'll never find it) later recites the fortune teller La Santona to the question of the whereabouts of the stolen bicycle.

This dialectics of presence/absence pervades the film as an element of suspense, even in the first segment where Antonio still has the bicycle. The title of the film already foreshadows the "huge event," in Zavattini's words, and the bicycle's exaggerated presence always signals its foreshadowed absence: "The bicycle is there, and it's not there" (Image 6).

Image 6: The dialectics of the bicycle's presence and absence – stills from *Ladri di Biciclette* (Vittorio de Sica, 1948)

This dialectics of presence/absence also represents Antonio's employment: he has a job and then he doesn't have it. It is possible to read these dualities in light of the uncertainties encapsulated in the politics of the time. The working-class would either struggle for its ideals or it would lose its power to the elite. The former could be

considered as the struggle to own the means of production, which is symbolised in Antonio's quest for the bicycle. In this line of thought, such a struggle resonates with the massive strikes of the post-war years and the power obtained by the working class. On the other hand, the latter stands for the usurpation of the means of production by the elite in restoring power to employing classes within the framework of the European Recovery Programme.

The dialectics of absence and presence also plays out in the rising element of chance and faith in a socially and economically unjust society. During the film, the Ricci family is repeatedly presented as a victim of a wider social crisis. The encounters of Antonio and Bruno in their perambulations across the city depict this social crisis in diverse ways. In the restaurant scene, for example, the inequality between the rich and the poor is represented strongly through intercut images of food consumption. When Antonio and Bruno lose all their hope of finding the bicycle, they visit La Santona, which is represented with a certain touch of irony as the last resort of the hopeless poor and rich alike since no real solution is offered. Furthermore, the struggle, which has been carried out on the streets and in the workplaces by the workers, is handed over to an absent force out of this world. In the end, Antonio is tempted to steal a bicycle, which puts the fixed notions of protagonist and antagonist in motion through a dialectical method. As Shiel notes, "The tracing of Antonio's evolution from worker to thief suggests that all crime may be socially caused by poverty." The walking-shot is a significant tool for revealing such social facts. The film embodies Zavattini's emphasis on walking as an exploratory tool in filmmaking: "We will make a film with whichever conclusions, when – walking walking walking – we will find the true meaning of sadness and happiness.[68]

[68] Minghelli, p. 127.

Ladri di Biciclette thus marks a turning point in the aesthetics of the neorealist walking-shot in its evolution into modern cinema in the face of the masses' disappointment and loss of faith in shaping politics.[69] However, as a spatial practice, the walking shot persists in later works by Rossellini, Antonioni and Fellini as a political act against the dominant structures of space, albeit in different ways, which Giuliana Bruno and Gilles Deleuze have explained, as briefly mentioned in the beginning of this chapter.

Conclusion: Walking-Shot as Spatial Practice

Urban landscapes in neorealism, excavated, recorded and conveyed through walking shots that shadow wandering characters, are sites of political action against repressive spatial politics that control the movement of citizens. The neorealist filmmakers' decision to go out onto the street and encounter everyday life was, in many ways, a rebellion against the manufactured reality within the confined spaces of Cinecittà, one of the biggest cultural hegemony projects of Mussolini's fascist establishment. With a general codex that ordered the depiction of the present and the future social order as fascist, cinema in the interwar years contributed to the way society was organised and

[69] Antonioni, upon being asked in 1958 whether neorealism is dead, responds "Not exactly. It is more correct to say that neorealism is evolving, because whenever a movement or a current ends, it gives life to what comes after it (…) Neorealism of the post-war period, when realist was what it was, so intensely present, focused on the relationship between characters and reality. What was important was that very relationship. Today, instead, since that reality has – more or less, for better or for worse – been normalised, it seems important to me to look for that is left inside the characters of all their past experiences. That's why, nowadays, it's no longer important to make a film about a man whose bicycle has been stolen – that is, a film about a character who is important because his bicycle has been stolen, and just for this (…) Today, once the problem with the bicycle has been eliminated – I am speaking metaphorically, try to see beyond my words – it is important to see what is inside this man whose bicycle was stolen, what are his thoughts, what are his feelings, how much is left inside of him of his past experiences, of the war ,or the period after the war, of everything that has happened to our country." In the same interview, Antonioni again cites *pedinare* as a significant tool, which shows that even though the neorealist style was evolving, *pedinare* maintained an exploratory and revelatory tool. He says, "One of my concerns in filming is to follow the characters until I feel it is time to stop. To follow them not for the sake of it, but because I think it is important to establish, to capture the moments in the life of a character that appear to be less important." From "My Experience" in *The Architecture of Vision*, pp. 8-9.

regulated. It can be claimed that, in response to Cinecittà, the neorealist filmmakers set out to create their true cinematic city by wandering the streets, registering the realities, making "any hour of the day, any place, and any person"[70] and any-space-whatever the subject of their films. This is the core of *pedinamento*, formulated by Zavattini in the cultural context of post-war filmmaking in Italy.

Of course, it would be naive to consider the streets to be entirely free of fascist hegemony or as the sole carriers of resistance. Henri Lefebvre reminds us that the exercise of hegemony never leaves the urban space untouched, and that the space is never only the passive locus of social relations. Rather, it is active in the reproduction of the existing mode of production yet never thoroughly purged of contradictions.[71] *Roma, Città Aperta* portrays these dynamics without any reductive binary between the interior and exterior urban spaces, or between stability and movement. In the film, the practices of walking produce a social space from below, eroding the oppressive domination designed to control, capture or impede movement. Rossellini's cinematic pedestrianism is a similar act of resistance. He achieves this not only through creating alternative spaces or articulating them on the screen but also by producing aesthetic tools modelled upon the lacunary and dispersive reality of the post-war. The reason why the walking-shot becomes increasingly prevalent in neorealism, and later in the modernist cinema of Antonioni and Fellini, is because walking is a spatial practice that can articulate, challenge, and erode the dominant production of space.

Situating himself within such a Lefebvrian notion of social space, Michel de Certeau formulates walking as a spatial practice that is a multiform, resisting, tricky, and stubborn procedure that eludes discipline without being outside the field in which

[70] Zavattini, p. 52.
[71] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. D. Nicholson Smith (Malden: Blackwell, 1991), p. 11.

it is exercised.[72] Even though practiced within the hegemonic structures of the urban space, elusive and unpredictable movement gives walking an advantage of being multiform, resisting, tricky and stubborn. For de Certeau,

> To walk is to lack a place. It is the indefinite process of being absent and in search of a proper. The moving about that the city multiplies and concentrates makes the city itself an immense social experience of lacking a place – an experience that is, to be sure, broken up into countless tiny deportations (displacements and walks), compensated for by the relationships and intersections of these exoduses that intertwine and create an urban fabric, and placed under the sign of what ought to be, ultimately, the place but is only a name, the City. [73]

The dual quality expressed in this quote, e.g. the image of the city as a fabric interwoven with the relations and intersections of walkers, each continuously taking leave of the place that they occupy with each step, corresponds to the year zero discourse that prevailed in post-war Italy and Germany. In Rossellini's *Germania Anno Zero*, as de Certeau says, there is both displacement and void at the heart of the city. The same could be said for *Ladri di Biciclette*, which is built upon an absent item, or in *Umberto D.,* which portrays a lack.

In the early Italian neorealist films, what produces the urban fabric of post-fascist European cities is the endless wanderings of the characters. In their walks, these characters lack a place, in the sense de Certeau describes. Their perambulations also signify a figurative displacement, or aberration, in an age of massive migrations and mobility. The perpetual wanderers in neorealism, if not constructing the city from zero, provide an intimate analysis of space in post-war Italy. They are shaped and affected by their surroundings, perhaps even more than they are themselves able to shape or

[72] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. S. Randall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 96.
[73] Ibid, p. 103.

affect them. This led Deleuze to conclude that neorealist characters were "seers," not "agents," and that they are floating in "purely optical situations" to which they have no response or no reaction.[74] Nevertheless, the pedestrianism of neorealist characters is not always a floating wandering; it also portrays an intimate analysis of space as 'lived' experience (landscape, city, trattoria or family, factory, neighbourhood and other institutions as social spaces). This is reminiscent of Gramsci's analytical perspective of historicising and his notion of cultural hegemony, which sheds light on how institutions shape human will. Contrary to the general conviction that neorealist characters are passive, I have tried to show here how neorealism combined pedestrianism as a political spatial practice with a cinematic practice. After the defeat of fascism, the streets belonged to the people again so going out onto the streets with a camera meant simultaneously rebuilding and reclaiming the urban space. The neorealist walking shot can therefore be considered as an aesthetic-political spatial practice that simultaneously revealed the workings of social space while producing spaces of resistance.[75] In the next chapter, I will further explore how the Italian neorealist walking-shot was taken up in French Nouvelle Vague. Again, contrary to the general conviction that the stroll, wandering or flânerie in French Nouvelle Vague was a trope that tied together "pure optical and sound situations," constantly mixing the dream (imagination) and the real,[76] I will focus on a marginal Nouvelle Vague filmmaker: Agnès Varda. Given that pedestrianism constantly appears in her work, Varda's filmography can shed light on pedestrianism as a political (specifically feminist) spatial practice.

[74] Deleuze, *Cinema 2: Time-Image*, p. 2.
[75] See Bazin, A. "Bicycle Thieves," in Cardullo, p. 67.
[76] In *Cinema 2: Time-Image*, Deleuze argues that *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* is the last of the great neorealist films; see *Cinema 2: Time-Image*, p. 7.