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# The Italian *Musicarello*: Youth, Gender, and Modernization in Postwar Popular Cinema

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# The Italian *Musicarello*:
# Youth, Gender, and Modernization in Postwar Popular Cinema


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**Dissertation**

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**The University of Texas at Austin**

**May 2017**

# Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my family, friends, colleagues, and mentors, all of whom offered me invaluable support, wisdom, and feedback throughout my academic career. I would also like to dedicate this work to all female scholars in the making, to encourage them that their intelligence, persistence, and passion will not go unnoticed.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to Professors Paola Bonifazio and Guy Raffa, who have always encouraged me to pursue research that I am truly passionate about. I am grateful for their constant mentorship and dedication to my writing, continually providing me with feedback and opportunities to improve my research as well as my professional development. I would also like to thank all of my dissertation committee members for their encouragement and the time they dedicated to my project. A special thanks to the UT Graduate Writing Center and their consultants for offering me invaluable resources and support while completing my dissertation, as well as to my colleagues and graduate coordinator who made my graduate studies a positive and encouraging experience.

## The Italian *Musicarello*:

## Youth, Gender, and Modernization in Postwar Popular Cinema


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The University of Texas at Austin, 2017

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The *musicarello* was a popular Italian film cycle consisting of more than eighty musical films from 1959 through the 1960s, a period that coincided with Italy's postwar industrialization. During the postwar economic boom, these musical films emerged as a new form of popular cinema that was unique from other Italian postwar genres because of their intended youth audience, and because of their reference to British and North American popular entertainment. The films were primarily star vehicles, promoting and augmenting the careers of emerging young popular musicians such as Mina, Rita Pavone, Caterina Caselli, Gianni Morandi, Adriano Celentano, and Little Tony. This dissertation details how these young stars and their musical film performances represented youth and their consumer and entertainment choices during Italy's era of modernization and consumerism, and how the films offered empowering representations of marginal, queered, and liminal subjectivities for young Italians. Analyzed within this framework, I argue that the *musicarello* can be perceived as camp because it represented the way in which youth and gender are performative and fluctuating subjectivities. While there has been an increased attention on popular cinema in Italian film scholarship, there have been few studies on the *musicarello* in both Italian and English scholarship at large. In this

extensive study of the musical films, my methodology consists of close text formal analysis and an engagement with American and Italian film scholarship, cultural studies, and gender/queer theories. My formal analyses focus on film narratives, character development, musical numbers, and star status, alongside my examination of recurring themes, narratives devices, and tropes within the cycle. With a heavy emphasis on socio-historical contextualization and youth culture, my project adds to current scholarship on 1960s Italian youth culture and mass media, thereby filling a void not only in Italian film studies, but also in studies on Italian youth representation.

## Table of Contents

Introduction........................................................................................................1

The Evolution of the *Musicarello* and its Principal Singers..........................5

Investigating the *Musicarello*: Literature Review ........................................9

1960s Youth Culture and Representation on Screen ...................................14

Chapter Overview .........................................................................................19

Chapter One: Hybridity, Performance, and Self-Reflexivity: Reexamining Recurring Devices and Themes in the Musical Genre ................................................24

Discussing the Musical as Hybrid and its Docu-Fictional Quality...............28

Complicating the Hollywood Musical's Conflict Resolution and Narrative Dichotomies .........................................................................................36

Exposing Myth through Self-Reflexive Narratives .....................................43

Contextualizing the Musicarello as a Postwar Comedy ..............................48

Hybridity and Parody in the Camp Musical ................................................54

Conclusion ...................................................................................................64

Chapter Two: The Myth of Reconciliation: Generational Conflicts and Consumer Culture in the Jukebox Films ........................................................................66

Youth Empowerment through Culture and Consumerism ..........................72

Integration VS. Individualism: The Myth of Community in the Dual-Focus Narrative .................................................................................................81

*I ragazzi del juke-box* (1959) ..........................................................................89

*Juke-box – Urli D'amore* (1959) ..................................................................99

*Urlatori alla sbarra* (1960) .........................................................................108

Conclusion .................................................................................................115

Chapter Three: Comedic Devices in the *Musicarello*: Identity Performance and the Reexamination of Male Crisis in the Postwar Period ................................117

Cinematic Depictions of Male Failure: Reexamining Masculinity in Crisis119

The Male *Inetto* in Postwar Cinema .........................................................123

Shifting Gender Dynamics in Subplots with Supporting Characters .........127

Celentano's Self-Parody and Alternative Masculinity in *Uno strano tipo* (1962) ....................133

Performance and Trial-and-Error in *Cuore matto… matto da legare* (1967)145

Conclusion ....................153

Chapter Four: Hybridity and Queering in Rita Pavone's *Musicarelli*: Rethinking Genre and (Young) Women's Representation ....................155

Pavone's Star Persona in the '60s ....................156

What is a "Woman's Film," Anyway? ....................163

*Little Rita nel West* (1967): Gender Role Reversal and Parody of a Male-Dominated Genre ....................171

*Rita la zanzara* (1966) and *Non stuzzicate la zanzara* (1967): Female Masculinity and the Post-Modern Fairy Tale ....................180

Conclusion: The Post/Neo-Feminist Girl and Additions to Feminist Film Scholarship ....................199

Conclusion ....................203

Bibliography ....................210

Vita .. ....................222

# Introduction

In one of Mina's (Mina Mazzini) earliest roles in cinema, she stars as Marcella, a young woman that has recently returned to Rome after studying abroad. Raised in a traditional family, Marcella is an admirer of classical and melodic Italian music, never having experienced contemporary music (of that period) until stumbling upon a run-down nightclub in a residential neighborhood. Marcella becomes instantly enamored with the new americanized youth music when she hears a group of young singers at a bar, also known as the *urlatori* (shouter), and falls in love with the nightclub's owner Paolo. On later returning to the bar, Marcella admires the singers' happy, blissful lives, to which Paolo states, "La musica dà qualcosa a ciascuno di noi in maniera diversa. Con la musica non ci annoiamo mai" ("Music gives something to every one of us in a different way. With music we'll never be bored"). He explains that he chose an interesting profession rather than following in his father's footsteps as a notary. Surprised, Marcella tells Paolo that she lacks the courage to pursue a passionate career, to which he responds, "allora tu non sei sincera con te stessa" ("then you aren't sincere with yourself"). For the remainder of the film Marcella aids the young singers in renovating their bar so they can avoid eviction from her father, the head of a construction company seeking to tear down every establishment in the neighborhood.

This scene, from Piero Vivarelli's *Io bacio…tu baci* (*I Kiss…You Kiss*, 1961), exemplifies how the Italian *musicarello* portrayed music and cross-cultural exchange as influential forces on postwar youth's values and their sense of identity. Addressing a

primarily youth audience, these musical films offer representations of an emerging youth music culture during Italy's postwar period of industrialization, also known as the economic boom. I argue that the films offer narratives in which youth entertainment and culture are associated with modernized soundscapes (sound technology such as the jukebox, electric guitar, and the transistor radio) and advancements in mass media. In my examinations and formal analyses, I discuss how the films represent youth as a generation that utilized modern goods and advocated modern values and lifestyles—including changing social and gender behaviors. Based upon these analyses, this dissertation investigates how the cycle incorporated postwar popular music and young stars to construct narratives in which entertainment and consumerism are avenues for youth self-expression, social agency, and experimentation in an increasingly fragmented modern society.

The Italian *musicarello* consisted of a large collection of musical films, with close to eighty releases between 1959 and 1970. Preceded by opera films and Neapolitan musicals (*sceneggiate*), and followed by contemporary rockumentaries and recorded concerts, the films constitute a sub-category of Italian musical cinema that functioned to promote emerging young singers in the commercial entertainment industry. The term *musicarello* recalls the *carosello* advertisements, a national television programming in which short narrative sketches marketed consumer goods between 1957 and 1977, some of which even featured the *musicarelli* stars. The films began only two years after the onset of the *carosello*, and although the origins of the term *musicarello* are uncertain, the connection between the films and the *carosello* is significant. Not only did *musicarello*

singers perform in the *carosello* advertisements, both the films and the advertisements were targeted primarily to younger audiences and utilized soft marketing. The *carosello* advertisements followed a regulation in which they could only explicitly reference their product during the last few seconds of the ad, resulting in advertisements that were more focused on a fictional narrative than on the product itself. Through this structure, the ads could appeal to children while also marketing to their parents. Likewise, the *musicarello* likely marketed consumer goods (youth fashion, jukebox records, scooters) to youth through narrative form; furthermore, in this dissertation I argue that the films marketed more than goods and music, and that they promoted a larger culture of entertainment through which youth could find self-expression. While scholarship on the films is currently growing, the *musicarello* is usually only mentioned within larger studies on postwar popular music and within studies on specific singers/stars (most commonly on Adriano Celentano and Mina), and there is still very little formal analysis of the collection and understandings of recurring themes, narratives, and cinematic devices. This dissertation fills this void by investigating some of the *musicarello*'s structural devices and revealing their underlying ideologies.

From here on, I refer to the collection as a "cycle" rather than as a genre or sub-genre, a term I have chosen not only because of the films' emphemerality, but more precisely because I believe they addressed conflicts and anxieties specific to their historical audience. Amanda Ann Klein explains that unlike a film genre, cycles "are so dependent on audience desires" that they are "also subject to defined time constraints,"

usually lasting from five to ten years before almost entirely disappearing.[1] I believe that the *musicarello* specifically addressed audiences living in a time of economic, social, and cultural transition by dramatizing anxieties about modernization, the rise of consumerism, and the increasing public presence of young Italians. Additionally, Klein explains that "film cycles are fascinating precisely because they resist neat categorizations and have the potential to disrupt or complicate the discrete categories frequently generated by genre studies."[2] I believe the disruptive function of film cycles is evident in the Italian films because of their hybridity and self-reflexivity, characteristics upon which I have founded my theoretical and analytical approaches for examining the films (detailed in Chapter One).

Because the films were star vehicles, their plots often revolve around a young singer's journey to success in the entertainment industry, or their struggle to gain independence outside of the home by mean of the new music culture and its associated consumer goods (fashion, scooters, records, etc.). Both of these narrative motifs are dramatized through generational conflicts, in which older generations or parents view the new popular music and overseas fashion and dance as threatening to conservative values and lifestyles. Similar to the American "backstage musical" sub-genre (films that dramatize the act of putting on a show, most typified by director Busby Berkeley), the majority of the *musicarelli* are also self-reflexive; the narratives follow an aspiring singer

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[1]Amanda Ann Klein, *American Film Cycles: Reframing Genres, Screening Social Problems, and Defining Subcultures* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2012).

[2] Ibid., 6.

or an already-famous singer as they experience common daily activities or situations relatable to youth, including attending school, completing military service, and gathering with friends in nightclubs or bars. Through my narrative and formal analyses, my study explores questions such as: how do the films' generational and cultural disparities represent societal tensions of the postwar period, especially in relation to new forms of entertainment and cross-cultural exchange, including Americanization. How does the cycle's self-reflexivity call attention to the anxieties about mass culture and the consumer goods associated with the music culture (fashion, scooters, records)? And what are some of the cycle's underlying messages about modernization and youth?

## THE EVOLUTION OF THE *MUSICARELLO* AND ITS PRINCIPAL SINGERS

Because this study aims to identify how and in what ways the cycle represented the social and cultural concerns of the postwar period, it is important to first contextualize the films within their period of production and review the specific stars and music they promoted. During the economic boom, the *musicarello* emerged as a new commercial cinema alongside the successful *commedia all'italiana*, peplum epics, and western films. The musical films were made quickly, some produced and released in only four weeks, and with low budgets, but the cycle gained enough popularity to continue through the rest of the decade.[3] Despite their low production quality, the films made enough revenue to

[3] Sources disagree on how much the films cost, with averages between 65 and 200 million lire. See Sergio M. Germani, Simone Starace, and Roberto Turigliatto's test *TITANUS: Cronoca familiare del cinema italiano* (Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia and Edizioni Sabinae. 2014), Mauro Buzzi's *La canzone pop e il cinema italiano: Gli anni del boom economico (1958-1963)* (Torino: Kaplan, 2013) and Luca Gorgolini's "Pratiche e luoghi dei consumi giovanili negli anni Sessanta." *Memoria e Ricerca*. Vol 23 (2006): 83-94.

help production companies such as Lux and Titanus that were facing economic hardships during the rise of television sales and in-home entertainment.[4] The cycle's popularity and value to the postwar film industry is evidence enough that the films deserve more attention in Italian film studies, especially for studies on the history of Italian musical film and of postwar popular cinema. Furthermore, in addition to the films' commercial success, the *musicarelli* are valuable resources for examining how youth and consumer culture were represented, and even marketed, during the economic boom.

The cycle is unique from other postwar film genres because of its intended youth audience and its function as a star vehicle, but they were also distinct from previous Italian musicals. Mauro Buzzi explains that the films were not a substitute for a previous formula, but that their advent was a departure from a dying (an "exhausted") genre, the Neapolitan *sceneggiate*.[5] The short-lived Neapolitan films (late 1940s-1950s) similarly showcased famous recording artists and newly released songs, but they engaged specifically with southern audiences by representing regional cultural differences from a southern perspective.[6] Based on the *sceneggiata napolitana*, a type of musical melodrama that originated in theater, Neapolitan musical films follow an "extremely formulaic" narrative employment of stock characters, recurrent themes of jealousy and family

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[4] Germani et al., *Titanus*, 377-378.

[5] "Possiamo quindi affermare che i primi *musicarelli* non vanno a sostituire una precedente formula che soppiantano, ma il loro avvento si situa succesivamente alla dipartite di un genere, certo ancora vivo nella memoria, ma ormai esaurito nel proprio ciclo di esistenza." Buzzi, *la canzone pop*, 72

[6] Alex Marlow-Mann, "Italy," 80-91. In *The International Film Musical*, ed. Corey K. Creekmur and Linda Y. Mokdad (Edinburgh: University Press, 2012), 85.

reliance, and the use of song to convey emotion.[7] Shortly after the demise of the *sceneggiata*, the *musicarelli* emerged in the last years of the 1950s with a broader audience, focusing on young Italians from all geographic regions. Rather than incorporating songs exclusively as instruments of sentimentality, the *musicarello* uses song to depict a singer's journey to success through stage performances or recordings, and to emphasize scenes of youth gatherings or leisure activities (often in nightclubs).

The new musicals diverged from the Neapolitan musical's specifically regional representation by promoting cross-cultural exchange and diversity—the new youth music culture was directly influenced by American and British entertainment and consumer goods, and these overseas influences were represented on-screen. Identifying the different phases of the *musicarello* is useful for beginning to understand how the cycle engaged with overseas culture throughout the decade. The earliest films in the cycle, the *urlatori* or jukebox films, reveal the extent to which the new music culture was influenced by American rock'n'roll from the late 1950s to mid-1960s, most of which star Mina and Adriano Celentano. The cycle then continued in the mid to late-1960s with a series of "Bitt" (the Italian term for "beat") films influenced by British beat music, starring Rita Pavone and Caterina Caselli. Little Tony (Antonio Ciacci), who began his career as an Elvis impersonator, starred in a series of military musicals from 1961 up until the cycle's demise in 1970. Some of Ettore M. Fizzarotti's films starring Gianni Morandi seem to fall in-between rock'n'roll and beat styles, residing in the broader genre of "musica

[7] Alex Marlow-Mann, *The New Neapolitan Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 43, 49.

leggera" (pop music). The cycle concluded with more traditionally melodic songs and melodramatic narratives starring Al Bano and Romina Power at the turn of the decade, a duo that was likely influenced by Sonny and Cher.

American and U.K. influences are not only evident in the new music style promoted by the film (through song covers or similar lyrics and instrumentation), but also in their inclusion of overseas fashion and goods such as blue jeans and jukeboxes. The increasing demand for overseas goods and entertainment was largely due to the prevalence of U.S. imports during and after WWII, and later on from the influence of The Beatles and the spread of the fan craze known as "beatlemania."[8] In considering how prominently the films represented overseas culture and goods, a secondary aim of this study is to show how the *musicarello* provides insight into processes of cross-cultural exchange in postwar Italy. My examinations of the cycle's structure and narrative devices, which I analyze primarily in Chapters One and Two, demonstrate that the films' adaptation of overseas culture occurs even beyond its promotion of Italianized rock'n'roll and beat music, and that the films actually adapted some of the Hollywood musical's genre conventions for an Italian context and for their own ideological function.

Since the cycle included a rather large number of films, I have limited my film analyses to those that were most accessible via on-line streaming services (albeit often temporarily), in Italian public libraries, and in DVD form, and to those that featured the

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[8] According to Pierre Sorlin, 75 percent of box-office revenue in 1949 belonged to American imports. This domination was gradually reduced as the production of Italian films increased in the next decade, but Sorlin states that Hollywood imports were still prevalent (53 percent of the box-office revenue) in 1954. *Italian National Cinema: 1896 – 1996* (London: Routledge, 1996), 84-85.

most famous singers of the new music style. There is insufficient study and information available about the cycle's reception during its period of production, so I have made the assumption that because these selected films still have some circulation today, that they may have also received a generous amount of success at the time of their release. That being said, many of my film analyses are also descriptive in nature since scholars outside of Italy have little to no access to the films and little knowledge of their narratives.

## **INVESTIGATING THE *MUSICARELLO*: LITERATURE REVIEW**

Despite the large number of *musicarelli* produced from 1959-1970, the films have been largely overlooked in Italian film scholarship. Filling this void is critical not only for Italian film and star studies, but also for scholarship on youth representation in Italian cinema, a subject that has been woefully understudied. Alternatively, studies on popular music and youth culture of the 1960s frequently reference the films within larger social and cultural discussions or within star studies, studies with which I engage throughout this dissertation. However, these discussions rarely attend to the cycle as its own subject of study, and there is currently no comprehensive text about the films in the English language.

Although scholarship on Italian popular music rarely intersects with studies of the *musicarello*, the growing academic interest in postwar genres and singers contributes to larger understandings of how the artists featured in the films modernized popular music and engaged with foreign culture. Many contributions in the recent collection *Made in Italy: Studies in Popular Music* (2014) agree that a glaringly new form of popular music

emerged in the late 1950s that was initiated by Mina, Adriano Celentano, and Domenico Modugno, singers that also starred in the early *musicarelli*.[9] Stephen Gundle explains that these three singers initiated a modernization of popular music by fusing it with foreign entertainment, especially Modugno, who "found a way of modernizing the melodic tradition such that it could capture new sensibilities and tastes."[10] Modugno's innovations in music quickly led to the birth of the *urlatori* by inspiring more singers to musically "translate" American and U.K. culture and "present novelties to an Italian public in an accessible form."[11] Gundle explains that some musicians simply produced covers of overseas songs, but that the *urlatori* and "bitt" singers instead adapted foreign music to an Italian context. This discussion on how the youth music culture represented modernization aligns with my own examination of the cycle's representation of processes of modernization, such as the Italianization of American and British entertainment, and the incorporation of Hollywood musical narrative devices.

Regarding the films themselves, there are only four books and two articles/essays in which the cycle is the main object of study, two of which are encyclopedic in nature and offer a cursory description of the genre along with brief film synopses. The collections *Nessuno ci può giudicare: il lungo viaggio del cinema musicale italiano (1930-1980)* (1998) and *Cuori Matti: Dizionario dei musicarelli italiani anni ' 60* (2012)

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[9] Franco Fabbri and Goffredo Plastino, ed., *Made in Italy: Studies in Popular Music* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

[10] Stephen Gundle. "Adriano Celentano and the Origins of Rock and Roll in Italy," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 11.3 (2006): 370.

[11] Ibid.

provide little analytical engagement with the films, but their compilations are useful for summarizing films that are no longer in circulation, and for identifying how large the collection was.[12] In the book *Dopo Carosello: Il musical cinematografico italiano* (2006), Simone Arcagni historically contextualizes the films as a part of a larger study on Italian musical cinema. He dedicates a chapter to categorizing the films according to settings—music festivals, at the beach, or about military service. In order to situate the films within a larger study of Italian musical cinema, he includes a formal analysis of some of Rita Pavone's films by comparing their cinematography and performance sequences to other film musical sub-genres. While this chapter is a useful introduction to the films, I treat the *musicarello* as a unique collection of musical films that must be examined within its own historical context and for its specific audience (postwar youth).

For example, in my investigation of the cycle's conventions and recurring narrative tropes, I explore how these devices serve to represent youth as an age of in-betweenness or self-discovery. My study thereby intersects film scholarship and formal film analysis with gender and queer studies. Some studies on Mina, Pavone, and Celentano have discussed the stars' representations of gender and sexuality, but there is far less attention to what the *musicarelli* add to this discourse. Claudio Bisoni's 2014 article is one of the few to directly contribute to this scholarship, in which he questions whether recurring visual motifs in the films are agents of eroticism, specifically those of

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[12] Daniele Magni, Maurizio Maiotti, Manuel Cavenaghi, and Fulvio Fulvi, eds. *Cuori Matti: Dizionario Dei Musicarelli Italiani Anni '60* (Milano: Jamboree, 2012), Simone Arcagni, *Dopo Carosello: Il Musical Cinematografico Italiano* (Alessandria: Falsopiano, 2006).

kissing, dancing, and gesturing.[13] He asserts that these images ultimately fail to display youth promiscuity and sexuality, and that their erotic potential is rendered ineffective because the narratives have tamed the promiscuous quality of rock'n'roll culture. Bisoni believes that the *musicarelli* are problematic because they are cautious with their depictions of sexual desire, consequently hiding conservative depictions of sexuality behind images of rock'n'roll. It is worth noting that Bisoni's study is focused on what I believe are the cycle's more normative films, such as Fizzarotti's *Una lacrima sul viso* (*A Tear on Your Face*, 1964) starring Bobby Solo, and his *In ginocchio da te* trilogy starring Morandi.[14] The scholar explains that not all young Italians were affected by modernity because some remained in provincial areas rather than moving to northern industrial areas, so these normative films may have been more relatable to provincial youth audiences because of their promotion of traditional family values. [15] Alternatively, for my analyses I have chosen to focus on the many other *musicarelli* that do challenge normative values, gender representation, and social dynamics. I agree that most of the films lacked the eroticism that was more prevalent in 1950s-1960s overseas rock'n'roll and beat music, but they still challenged traditional images of gender and youth experience through non-normative depictions of masculinity and femininity.

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[13] Claudio Bisoni, "'Il problema più importante per noi/è di avere una ragazza Di Sera'. Percorsi della sessualità e identità di gender nel cinema musicale italiano degli anni Sessanta," *Cinergie,* 5 (2014): 70-82.

[14] The trilogy consist of three films named after Morandi's hit singles during those years: *In ginocchio da te* (*Kneeling By You*, 1964) *Se non avessi più di te* (*If I No Longer Had You*, 1965), and *Non son degno di te* (*I'm Not Worthy of You*, 1965).

Another main characteristic of the cycle's conventions is its focus on generational conflicts, a recurring narrative motif that is directly tied to the *musicarello*'s representation of youth. Two scholars, via book chapters, advance conversations about the films both through historical context and by analyzing this narrative theme. Alex Marlow-Mann's essay in *The International Film Musical* (2012) considers the *musicarello* as a unique Italian genre targeted toward a specifically youth consumer demographic. He notes that the *musicarello* materialized along with the emergence of exclusively youth-oriented music that participated in the creation of an independent youth market with new spending power.[16] However, he believes that the films did not actualize the revolutionary potential of rock'n'roll and beat music associated with rebellion and independence. Despite the cycle's attention to a budding generation, Marlow-Mann argues that it failed to make a significant impact on its audience because of the films' simplistic camerawork and normative narrative closure, those in which generational conflicts were easily resolved and harmonious. Mauro Buzzi likewise claims that the early *musicarelli* conclude harmoniously: the young singers are accepted by society "through the demonstration of their ability to integrate themselves in a non-revolutionary manner, from within the current system of values and tradition."[17] Buzzi's chapter "Il musicarello" in his book *La canzone pop e il cinema italiano: Gli anni del boom economico (1958-1963)* (*Pop music and Italian cinema: The Years of the Economic*

[16] Marlow-Mann, *The International Film Musical*, 86.

[17] "...attraverso la dimostrazione della loro capacità di integrarsi in maniera non rivoluzionaria, all'interno del sistema di valori e consuetudini vigente." Buzzi, *La canzone pop*, 104.

*Boom [1958-63]*, 2013) is the most well rounded study on the *musicarello* to date. He provides a comprehensive explanation of the cycle's origins and production details, including statistics on budgeting and casting, censorship, and surveys that attest to the films' popularity. Buzzi limits his study to the early *urlatori* films, but he offers valuable information about the production of the films, along with some narrative and script analysis that he contextualizes during a period of entertainment censorship. Unlike Buzzi's and Marlow-Mann's agreement on the cycle's depiction of harmony and integration, my analysis of *urlatori* films in Chapter Two instead place the theme of conflict resolution under scrutiny by questioning how the films, despite dealing with censorship, offered contradictory narratives of reconciliation to complicate or contradict the notion of harmonized modern societies. I argue that narratives seeming to promote reconciliation actually lean toward legitimizing and favoring youth culture, experiences, and independence in modern society by exposing the cracks in narratives of generational and cultural reconciliation.

## 1960s Youth Culture and Representation on Screen

The narratives' focus on generational differences is indicative of youth in the 1960s who desired independence and separation from their parents' generation. Mark Abram's report of U.K. youth consumerism, *The Teenage Consumer* (1959), describes the "teenager" as a demographic between ages 15 and 24, and as consumers with a large

interest in entertainment and leisure.[18] My discussion of youth refers to a similar age group, but I use the terms adolescent and teenager (14-17) and young adult (18 to early 20s) as belonging to the same youth generation. Since there is still little data about the cycle's reception and the exact demographic of its moviegoers, I have assumed that its targeted audience was close to the ages of the film characters.

In addition to casting young singers, I believe the films addressed a youth audience by focusing on characters with relatable personal aspirations, leisure activities, and desires, such as the search for independence and the separation from their parents' generation through modern goods and entertainment. Characters are often shown achieving financial independence, spending time with friends, dating, and discovering their own voice or purpose outside of the family. Additionally, the *musicarello*'s intermedial participation in the entertainment industry (promoting stars that were famous on television and the radio), and its dramatization of leisure activities and goods that were associated with the new music, made the films perhaps the perfect platform for addressing a generation coming-to-age during a period of modernization. In their study on the film industry and spectatorship, Francesco Casetti and Mariagrazia Fanchi assert that 1954-1964 marked a time in which cinema and consumerism were especially powerful vehicles for young Italians seeking change and distance from the past.[19] In

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[18] David Buckingham discusses Abram's work within a larger history of teenage consumption in "Selling Youth: The Paradoxical Empowerment of the Young Consumer", 202-224. In *Youth Cultures in the Age of Global Media*, ed. Sara Bragg, David Buckingham, and Mary Jane Kehily (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

[19] "l'esigenza di cambiamento, di presa di distanza dal passato". Francesco Casetti and Mariagrazia Fanchi, "Le funzioni sociali del cinema e dei media: dati statistici, ricerche sull'*audience* e storie di consumo,"

Chapter Three, I also discuss how this distancing from tradition is evident in films in which male protagonists break from conventional stereotypes of masculinity and virility, including financial responsibility and independence—by questioning the role of the breadwinner. Even in some of the more conservative narratives, starring Power, Al Bano, and Morandi, strong women who manipulate adult male characters challenge the patriarchal family structure. The *musicarello* also resists traditional values and lifestyles by emphasizing personal ambition and independence more than marriage and family. Some protagonists even explicitly declare their distaste for the union, as occurs in Ettore Fizzarotti's *Stasera mi butto* (*Tonight I Throw Myself*, 1967); in the opening scene a group of men and women in their late teens-early 20s gather around a hotel pool discussing marriage, many state that they have no interest in matrimony and one young woman asserts that she intends to work regardless of her family's wealth.

Dedicating screen-time to young stars was also an important change in the star system because it offered new role models, representatives, and depictions of the youth community. Casetti and Fanchi state that the youth generation considered mass media a significant resource through which they could actualize their desires, one of which was to "to make a clean sweep from tradition and to find new symbolic representatives to regroup themselves and regroup a social body."[20] The authors argue that the film industry failed to produce stars that were able to exploit "the opportunity to gain/secure younger

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135-170. In *Spettatori: Forme di consumo e pubblici del cinema in Italia: 1930-1960*, ed. Mariagrazia Fanchi and Elena Mosconi (Venice: Marsilio, 2002), 156.

[20] "fare piazza pulita della tradizione e di trovare nuovi referenti simbolici, a cui riaggregarsi e riaggregare il corpo sociale." Ibid., 156.

audiences,"[21] but they refer only to the *commedia all'italiana,* which they believe did not offer narratives relatable enough to everyday experiences.

Alternatively, the *musicarelli* narratives and casting choices clearly sought to represent young Italians on-screen, regardless of how accurate this representation might have been. Massimo Locatelli explains that young singers of the decade (those starring in the *musicarello*) broke away from the tradition of the stars/divas before them, no longer spreading ideas of national identity and social norms but rather promoting "the inclusion of different social agents and life-styles into a shared public space, a modern community."[22] Although data and resources about *musicarello* spectatorship are currently difficult to find or access, it is safe to assume the musical films offered more opportunities of identification for young viewers. The films may have also created an illusion of intimacy with the stars by intentionally associating the on-screen character with their off-screen persona; for instance, many of the main characters have the same names as the stars playing their parts, and most of the songs were hit singles that the moviegoer could listen to again at home or with friends.

The films address the generation's longing for mobility and freedom outside of the home by focusing on spaces of youth leisure and gathering, and it is important to note that these are also spaces that might have promoted youth bonding, and later on, political collectives. Though the cycle does not explicitly promote political values, likely due to

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[21] "l'occasione di fidelizzare il pubblico più giovane". Ibid., 167.

[22] Massimo Locatelli, "The Birth of Pop. The Soundscapes of the Early Sixties in Italian Cinema and Television," *Quaderns*, 9 (2014): 57.

censorship laws, youth culture and leisure have significant roles in the formation of youth sub-culture(s), so it is worth remembering that the young Italians who later participated in countercultural movements, such as the 1968 student protests, may have viewed these films and been fans of the music culture. Diego Giachetti asserts that prior to the rise of youth political meetings and assemblies, dance locales and concerts had already become "real communities of equals" founded on the need for young Italians of all backgrounds and customs "di stare insieme, di vivere insieme, intensamente" ("to stay together, to live together, intensely").[23] The new music provided cultural identification for a generation seeking to express their rebellion against societal norms and tradition, but who were not yet able to put their rebellion into action.[24] The drive for a more equal society was later solidified and put into action with the youth protests toward the end of the decade as a reaction to the middle-class bias of educational reforms and enrollment regulations that "failed to create a social equality."[25] For a generation that frequently lacks social status, respect, and political or legal rights within the society under which they are controlled, the *musicarello* exemplifies, at least narratively, how youth audiences seeking their own form of media representation and social equality frequently turn to leisure, entertainment, and consumer goods that are radically different from those of their parents' generation.

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[23] "I locali da ballo, i primi concerti dei rokkettari e dei beat divennero vere e proprie comunità di pari formate anche dal bisogno che travolse tutti di stare insieme, di vivere insieme, intensamente." Diego Giachetti, "Giovani in movimento nell'italia della contestazione e delle canzonette," 29-50. In *Il '68 Diffuso: Contestazione E Linguaggi in Movimento*. Ed. Silvia Casilio and Loredana Guerrieri (Bologna: CLUEB, 2009), 30-31.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Jonathan Dunnage, *Twentieth Century Italy: A Social History* (London: Longman, 2002), 171.

## Chapter Overview

My case studies analyze what societal tensions the *musicarello* addresses through narrative, character development, and recurring themes and devices. These analyses are grounded within larger discussions about cultural processes of modernization, and about youth representation in popular culture. The theoretical approaches I use in each of my case studies ultimately work together in a larger investigation of the *musicarello* as hybrid, self-reflexive, and camp. Consequently, I have dedicated Chapter One to the theoretical frameworks that I employ in the following case study chapters. Engaging with previous discussions on the film musical's form and its ideological function, which are currently dominated by scholars of Hollywood cinema, I discuss the musical genre's diversity and its resistance to concrete categorizations, and how these characteristics are especially prominent in the *musicarello*. I argue that inconsistencies in current musical genre studies are evidence that the musical film is a hybrid entity that resists or blurs distinct genre conventions. Within this discussion, I demonstrate that the *musicarello*'s breaking of boundaries and genre categories is not exclusive to its form, but that its formal devices work in conjunction with its non-normative gender representation—via tropes of impersonation, masquerade, and doubling—to resist notions of identity essentialism and to represent modern society as fragmented. I first examine how the cycle's self-reflexivity and narrative dualities expose and question myths of societal conflict resolution through narratives of generational difference. I then discuss how these formal features of the films work together with what I refer to as narrative "tropes of

hybrid identity," such as masquerade, impersonation, doubling, and gender role reversals, to represent how subjectivities in modern societies are fragmented, plural, and to a certain extent, always a performance. With a particular emphasis on youth and gender performance, this chapter examines how the *musicarello* produces cracks within seemingly conventional narratives by evoking discourse on identity as performance, a main facet of camp cinema.

In Chapter Two, I examine the *urlatori* or jukebox films (a term I have created because most of the films revolve around the object of the jukebox), the earliest films in the genre that I believe sought to legitimize youth and Italianized rock'n'roll during a time in which youth gained consumer power for the first time. I argue that unlike the classic Hollywood musicals, the jukebox films offer contradictory narrative conclusions about generational accord and the reconciliation of opposing values. I examine how the films adapted devices utilized by the classic Hollywood musical, specifically the dual-focus narrative and the harmonization of dualities that represent larger societal concerns. Founded on this analysis, I argue that the Italian films instead used these devices to demystify or problematize the notion of harmonized, utopian societies that the Hollywood musicals promoted. My analyses of three films, *I ragazzi del juke-box* (*The Jukebox Kids*, 1959), *Juke box – Urli D'amore* (*Jukebox – Shouts of Love*, 1959), and *Urlatori alla sbarra* (*Howlers in the Dock*, 1960), illustrate the way in which these narratives expose the paradoxical relationship between conformity and individualism, and the tension between modern and traditional values in a growing consumer and industrialized society.

In Chapters Three and Four, I analyze tropes of hybridity and notions of identity performance through non-normative gender representation, and how the selected *musicarelli* can be understood in terms of identity politics. I argue that the films destabilize gender roles and dynamics as well as conventional images of femininity and masculinity through the comedic use of impersonation, masquerade, imitation, and doubling. These tropes bring to the fore some of the processes through which youth might experiment with identity and their self in process. Since these tropes are especially prevalent in performance sequences or musical numbers, the films encourage discussions about youth and gender identity as performative. These chapters therefore advance my larger exploration of the cycle's camp quality because of its emphasis on theatricality, performance, and its resistance to gender stereotypes.

More specifically, in Chapter Three I engage with previous discussions of postwar cinematic depictions of masculinity in crisis by examining *musicarelli* in which male protagonists are feminized, vulnerable, or rendered as inept. I have selected specific films in which impersonation or doubling are central to their narrative, *Cuore matto…matto da legare* (*Crazy Heart*, 1967) starring Little Tony, and *Uno strano tipo* (*A Strange Type,* 1962) starring Adriano Celentano. I also address the way in which films with more conservative primary narratives utilize supporting characters and sub-plots to question traditional notions of masculinity through gender role reversals and the comical incompetence of adult male characters. Here Jacqueline Reich's discussion on the *inetto* (the character of the inept male) provides an integral framework for my analysis of masculinity in the *musicarelli* since many of the protagonists are comedic, clumsy, and

vulnerable around empowered women.[26] However, while the films occasionally portray these behaviors as effeminate, I argue they are presented in a way that is not necessarily perceived as a 'crisis,' but rather as a normal behavior in everyday youth experience. This chapter thus calls for a reexamination of discourses of postwar masculinity in crisis.

Unique from other Italian postwar genres, the *musicarello* attends equally to male and female perspectives because many of the films cast a female singer as the main protagonist. Film studies have increasingly attended to women's representation in popular cinema, but most scholars have concentrated on the Golden Age of Hollywood in their discussions of the woman's film. In Chapter Four, this dissertation's final case study, I examine how Rita Pavone's musical films, specifically *Rita la zanzara* (*Rita the Mosquito*, 1966) and its sequel *Non stuzzicate la zanzara* (*Don't Sting the Mosquito*, 1967), both directed by Lina Wertmüeller, and *Little Rita nel West* (*Crazy Westerners*, 1967), offer queered and alternative perspectives of female empowerment in relation to the 1940-1950s woman's film in Italy. Studies on the woman's film in Italy are still in development, and a large number of them focus on popular postwar melodrama. This chapter will demonstrate how Pavone's female-centered *musicarelli* adapt and alter elements of the woman's film within their comedic narratives to not only suit a youth audience, but to accommodate the changing conceptions of femininity and female empowerment in the 1960s. Because many of Pavone's films intentionally reference other genres, in addition to incoporating recurring tropes of impersonation and

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[26] Jacqueline Reich, *Beyond the Latin Lover: Marcello Mastroianni, Masculinity, and Italian Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2004).

masquerade, I examine how the star's representation of queerness and hybridity (plural, unstable identity) also manifests itself within the films' structure and meta-cinematic references. My formal analyses of these films and my study of Pavone's queered star persona illustrate how her films challenge both gender and genre categories, including current understandings of "gendered genres," such as the woman's film, fairy tale narratives, and male-dominated genres like the western and postwar comedy.

My film analyses and theoretical discussions in the following chapters are founded not only on my close-readings of the films, but as an initiative to understand how the films can be examined as products and representatives of their historical and cultural context. In hopes of not only offering new perspectives on 1960s Italian popular cinema, but also of adding to understandings of musical films more generally, I engage heavily with previous studies on musical cinema's form and cultural significance as a popular film genre. Furthermore, because the *musicarello* attended to youth figures and audiences during a period of national change and modernization, I have chosen to investigate how the films may have represented processes and experiences of modernization with a youth audience in mind. Youth is an age of transition, instability, and self-discovery, and I believe that reading the films through a queer lens—a lens that aligns well with musical cinema's theatricality and camp undertones—allows for a productive discourse about how youth, gender, and modern subjectivities are naturally performative and fragmented.

## Chapter One: Hybridity, Performance, and Self-Reflexivity: Reexamining Recurring Devices and Themes in the Musical Genre

Musical films are inherently hybrid, bringing together two forms of entertainment (music and visual narrative) and uniting traditions of the stage with the screen. I refer to the term "hybridity" in its most essential form, as a mixing or breaking of distinct categories or boundaries, but also as a process of change and fragmentation, both of which, combined, can create cracks in normative structures to symbolize larger notions of diversity and plurality. In the broadest sense, scholarship on musical cinema has already noted the genre's hybridity because the films are difficult to define according to specific or recurring generic conventions. However, few scholars have studied the genre in terms of its multitude of forms, off-shoots, and sub-genres that in fact offer a deeper understanding of the musical's larger function; that is, its adaptation to and representation of the social, cultural, and economic concerns of its particular time period and audience. Scholarship on the genre's complexity and its nuances is still lacking, perhaps because of the films' association with escapism, or because it is simply difficult to categorize them. There has been an even larger neglect and over-simplification of descriptions of the *musicarello*'s formal and narrative conventions, and the films are typically categorized as star-vehicles with simplistic narratives that "are essentially romantic comedies focusing on the protagonist's musical career and his/her love interest."[27] The *musicarello* is far more complicated than it appears, and by drawing on some of the most pivotal studies in

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[27] Alex Marlow-Mann, "Italy", 80-92. In *The International Film Musical*, ed. Corey K. Creekmur, and Linda Y. Mokdad (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 86.

musical film scholarship, I have identified recurring structural and narratives devices or tropes within the Italian cycle that best illustrate its hybridity and complexity.

In this chapter, I examine how the *musicarello*'s hybridity and self-reflexivity blur fiction (or artifice) and reality as formal and narrative devices that underscore the performative and theatrical essence of musical cinema. This underlying focus on performativity can then be understood in terms of camp aesthetics, which are also narratively or visually emphasized by the films' tropes of hybrid or fragmented identity. Recurring tropes of masquerade and impersonation, gender role reversals, and alternative representations of masculinity and femininity, expose how one's identity (and especially for youth) is often a performance. Because musical films are difficult to codify, it is not my intention to offer concrete understandings of the *musicarello*'s conventions, but rather to delve deeper into this discourse by considering how its formal hybridity or instability may serve a larger ideological purpose. By tracing the interactions between the *musicarello*'s formal features—including its self-reflexivity and its adaptation of a device common in Hollywood musicals—and its narratives that underscore identity as performance, this study discusses how the *musicarello* offers youth representations of identity as performance, especially in a fragmented modern society.

Musical films, while seemingly escapist, can offer understandings of their period of production when examining their underlying messages and representations. The genre's emergence and initial purpose in Hollywood's golden age was to address and temporarily ameliorate society's concerns, so it is natural that differing forms of the genre have and will emerge to address different struggles over time. Despite their variance over

time, the films are usually labeled simply as "musical films," "film musicals," or "movie musicals," with variants that refer to the tone (comedy, romantic, drama) or origins (operatic or Broadway films) of their narratives. It is not my intention to provide an alternative to the genre's label, but as a secondary aim of this chapter I will illustrate how examining the *musicarello* strengthens and expands upon what previous scholars have already begun noticing about musical films. Though the *musicarello* has been largely overlooked in Italian film scholarship, the films deepen understandings of musical cinema because of their strong sense of hybridity and self-reflexivity. The most evident example of their hybridity is the mixing of generic conventions and meta-cinematic or meta-generic references, most prominent in Rita Pavone's films (analyzed in Chapter Four). Some aspects that have not yet been explored, and which are underlying discussions throughout this dissertation, are how the cycle's self-reflexivity and hybridity problematize the musical film genre's creation of myth and offer space for a viewer's active engagement with the film texts. The cycle's hybridity and its blurring of reality and fiction also extend beyond its generic conventions to accent its narratives' representation of subjectivity (social, gender, and cultural) as fluid, performative, and always in progress. Analyzed within this perspective, I also investigate how the cycle exemplifies musical cinema's camp aesthetics by highlighting how performativity and theatricality provide spaces of representation for youth and gender performance.

Based upon my formal analyses of the films in the following three chapters, I first theorize that the cycle incorporated specific cinematic and narrative devices that were used in American Hollywood musical in order to address the social, culture, and

economic conflicts of Italians during the late 1950s through the ‘60s. The *musicarello* is well known for its reference to overseas entertainment, but few have attended to the way in which the cycle actually adapted and altered overseas culture for an Italian audience. The cycle emerged alongside the economic boom and Italy’s rise in industrialization, so its film narratives and structure are also illustrative of specific processes of modernization in mass media, specifically that of intermediality and transnational exchange, both of which I consider to be facets of the cycle’s hybridity in which it breaks formal, narrative, and even cultural boundaries.

In the first section of this chapter I will discuss how the cycle exposes the Hollywood musical’s construction of myths, especially regarding conflict resolution in a utopian society (the recurring device of dualities or dichotomies), and how its self-reflexivity calls attention to entertainment as a producer of myth. Examining the films’ self-reflexive narratives (plots about the entertainment industry) also leads to a deeper understanding about the role of mass culture on Italian youth, because these narratives portray entertainment and music culture as an avenue for youth independence and agency. Another major component of the cycle’s self-reflexivity is its creation of characters that are named after the casted star and display similar stage characteristics of the performer, a device I discuss in terms of blurring reality and fiction. The second half of this chapter investigates how the cycle’s self-reflexivity and resistance to harmonizing dualities can also be understood in terms of identity politics, specifically when considering their use of comedic tropes of hybrid or fluid identity in which identity is performed. In other words, the cycle’s self-reflexivity and comedic tropes expose

theatricality in a way that underlines larger notions of identity as performance. The recurring narrative or visual tropes in the films are doubling, impersonation, masquerade, and parody, all of which illustrate youth and gender subjectivities (and even star personas or identity) as performative and fluid by symbolizing the fragmentary and plural nature of identity performance. I argue that these tropes evoke notions of hybrid identity by resisting stable depictions of youth or gendered behavior and challenging conventional social and gender constructions. Since these tropes are used specifically for comedic ends, I will discuss how the cycle's representation of music and performance contributes to understandings of *musicarello*'s camp characteristic. Since this section examines comedic devices, I also identify how the Italian films' gender representation is unique from other comedies of postwar Italian cinema, specifically the Italian *commedia all'italiana*.

### DISCUSSING THE MUSICAL AS HYBRID AND ITS DOCU-FICTIONAL QUALITY

Given the complexity of this study, and of musical film scholarship more generally, I would like to first offer a framework for this chapter in which I detail how current scholarship has described (even if unintentionally) the musical genre as hybrid, and how I believe the *musicarello*'s hybridity works alongside its self-reflexivity. The varying approaches that have been used to categorize musical films generically, including the *musicarello*, indicates that their existence is inherently plural, as they continually disappear and reemerge in mainstream culture, and as their narrative conventions and aesthetics shift to produce historically and culturally specific narratives. While film genre

criticism on Hollywood musicals is rich, spanning different theories about its form and underlying ideologies, it also reveals the complexity of the genre and the impossibility of truly defining the films according to coherent generic conventions. This is part of the reason I have defined the *musicarello* as a cycle, because even within its own short existence the films changed immensely from their onset to their eventual disappearance from popular culture. I believe an essential component of the musical film lies precisely in its diversity, and within this perspective we can begin to understand one way in which the musical employs hybridity and self-reflexivity, discussions that have not yet been sufficiently explored.

The difficulty of defining musical films as one specific genre is made evident in Cari McDonnell's chapter—"Genre Theory and the Film Musical"—in the Oxford Handbook of Film Music Studies (2014), in which she provides a comprehensive review of the many methods and approaches in the scholarship. She observes that discussions vary depending on their area of focus: the musical's stage history, its interactions with other film genres, or its narrative and structure. Furthermore, most of this scholarship has favored integrated musicals (those with music numbers that progress the plot), which has consequently created a canon that is "small and unrepresentative."[28] Rick Altman, the pioneer and one of the most referenced scholars on the Hollywood musical, identifies the defining characteristics of canonical film musicals that led to his formulation of

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[28] Cari Mcdonnell, "Musical Film Studies," 245-269. In *The Oxford Handbook of Film Music Studies*, ed. David Neumeyer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 253.

subgenres—the fairy tale musical, the show musical, and the folk musical.[29] However, sub-categories and classifications are created differently by scholars who focus on the chronological and stage history of musicals; for example, in the Italian context Alex Marlow-Mann and Simone Arcagni describe groupings of film musicals over time, such as opera films, Neapolitan *sceneggiate*, the *musicarelli*, and films featuring contemporary rock bands.[30]

Altman also notes the disparity of academic approaches in the volume*, Genre: The Film Musical*, in which he compiled and edited a collection of film genre criticism about the musical film. His introduction to the volume stresses that the genre is far more complex than it first appears, and thus requires various types of formal and cultural analyses to understand the genre's ideological function: "Clearly foregrounding the ideology underlying this rhetoric, the articles in the collection nevertheless reach no common position. Far from closing the debate, location of the genre's ideology creates a new space for further discussion."[31] Although the volume might seem dated, published in 1981, it is still the only volume entirely dedicated to analyzing the genre and that provides a well-rounded collection of varying approaching, and the contributions are still widely referenced in contemporary scholarship on musical film. The volume intentionally

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[29] Rick Altman, *The American Film Musical* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

[30] Alex Marlow-Mann, "Italy", 80-92. In *The International Film Musical*, ed. Corey K. Creekmur, and Linda Y. Mokdad (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), and Simone Arcagni, *Dopo Carosello: Il Musical Cinematografico Italiano* (Alessandria: Falsopiano, 2006).

[31] Rick Altman, "Introduction", 1-7. In *Genre: The Musical*, ed. Rick Altman, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul in association with the British Film Institute, 1981), 5.

showcases the diversity in which scholars approach understandings of the musical film as a genre, but considering the wide range of readings and theories, it is surprising that there are insufficient discussions on the genre's resistance to categorization.

Despite these disparate dialogues, the consensus that musical cinema can be broken down into subgenres makes categorizing the films according to their generic conventions a difficult task. On-screen musicals are also difficult to codify because of their broad definition as any film or television series that incorporates diegetic music throughout its entire narrative. Under this definition the films are prime examples of how "genres that are defined according to a single characteristic, such as their tone (like comedy) or their semantic constitution," in this case the use of diegetic music numbers, "lend themselves particularly well to hybridization."[32] This understanding of hybridity is relevant to the *musicarello* since I believe its resistance to defined categories of genre also aligns with its narratives and tropes of hybrid identity to produce a visual representation of social and cultural transition (a context I detail further in my case studies), including representations of the in-betweenness of youth or adolescent experience.

I would argue that the genre's inconsistency in form and conventions parallels its ideological function—the representation of modern society and individual identity as diverse and fragmented—by provoking a sense of in-betweenness, largely because of its blurring of the line between fiction and reality. An in-between or marginal space,

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[32] Raphaëlle Moine, *Cinema Genre* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2008), 119.

between fiction and reality, is constructed by the musical's ability to create narratives and performances in which fiction feels real to audiences, even when they know what they are seeing is dramatized. Musical film performances seem to reside within a marginal space that is outside of the film's linear narrative, but this fantastical element of the form is often the primary space within which a character's emotions or intentions are expressed.[33] Amy Herzog explains that the "musical film is a 'mongrel' format, evolved from diverse traditions of vaudeville and the stage and encompassing hugely varied ranges of styles," but that it also features recurring "images of hybrids, of 'liminal between' spaces, and the imperceptible boundaries of transformation."[34] This analysis is astute when considering how a musical's hybrid form calls upon a viewer to use their imagination; the suspension of a viewer's desire for realistic narratives in exchange for a form that, ironically, expresses desires and inner conflicts more authentically through music and emotionally triggering performances. What is especially striking is Herzog's implication that the musical's formal aspects (mise-en-scène, choreography, spatial configurations) are aesthetically affected by music; she refers to this process as a "musical moment" in which the presence of music changes a viewer's perception of a scene. Herzog is one of very few scholars to suggest that there is connection between the musical's hybrid form and its representations of transformation and liminality. While she

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[33] See also Robynn J. Stilwell's text on diegetic music in cinema. "The Fantastical Gap Between Diegetic and Nondiegetic", 185-202. *In Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema*, ed. Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer, and Richard Leppert. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 197.

[34] Amy Herzog, *Dreams of Difference, Songs of the Same: The Musical Moment in Film* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 2, 11.

notes the power of music on a viewer's perception of a film, I believe that there are even more connections between a musical film's form and notions of in-betweenness that extend to both its self-reflexivity and focus on identity performance.

For example, fiction and reality frequently coincide in Rita Pavone's film *Rita la zanzara* (1966) during the character's daydreams, in which she performs stereotypical or excessive femininity through music covers or imitations. These sequences construct a marginal space within the film itself by halting a linear narrative to express a character's desire, but they also visualize a liminal space within the character's own mind or psychology, a space for desire and identity performance. A different type of a marginal space is presented in *I ragazzi del juke-box* (1959) and *Urlatori alla sbarra* (1960), in which fiction and reality are blurred through the presence of documentary techniques or aesthetics. *I ragazzi* begins with a voice-over that explains the film's setting and history, along with a satirical commentary about youth media representation (a scene I detail in Chapter Two). Even though this exposition introduces a fictionalized city in which the protagonists reside, the omniscient narrator's social commentary about media and cinematic representation reminds viewers that the film is addressing topics relevant to their own reality and time. In *Urlatori*, fake newspaper clippings are interspersed throughout the film, and the film's first scene is a lengthy documentary style segment; a voice-over offers a fictional account that traces the history of the *urlo* (the shout/yell) beginning from the stone-age to the film's present period. Vivian Sobchack explains that "Fiction film has regularly practiced the *appropriation of conventional documentary stylistic conventions,*" (original emphasis) such as voice-over narration, "direct address to

camera and audience by onscreen characters," and "visual materials that are considered 'documents'."[35] The examples above include voice-overs and fake documents, and many of the *musicarello* singers directly address audiences by looking into the camera while performing musical numbers. Pavone's segments are particularly good examples of this direct address because her character's daydreams and imagination are truly only witnessed by herself and the film's spectators; in other words, they are sequences that are only performed for the film audience, rather than for a diegetic audience.

The cycle's docu-fictional quality and its blurring of fiction and reality occur through different narrative processes and devices, and result in varying forms of marginal space, but I believe they reproduce similar underlying sentiments of in-betweenness and identity performance. This can occur in relation to character development and self-expression by using impersonation, masquerade, and musical performance as avenues for experimenting with self-expression and representation. At other times, or even simultaneously, this sense of liminality is experienced by the film's spectators through a "documentary consciousness," a process that Sobchack describes as "a particular mode of embodied and ethical spectatorship that informs and transforms the space of the irreal into the space of the real."[36] In fact, there seem to be more opportunities for this type of active or engaged viewership in the *musicarello* because of its self-reflexivity and its ability to use music, performance, and stardom as emotional or sensorial triggers.

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[35] Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: University of California, 2004), 133.

[36] Ibid.

In summation, the *musicarello*'s formal and thematic elements of in-betweenness, hybridity, and self-reflexivity expose how musical cinema engages with spectators and encourages a spectator's investment in the text. This occurs through their identification with relatable characters that also offer the illusion of playing their public persona on-screen (which I will explain more later on), their realization of non-fictional aspects of the narratives, such as underlying social and cultural themes, and their identification with the character's self-expression and depictions of youth and gender performance.

In the following section I discuss in what specific ways the *musicarello* exhibits its hybridity and self-reflexivity, including its blurring of reality and fiction, by exposing and complicating the formal conventions used in Hollywood musicals. Sobchack argues that all fiction films have the potential to be viewed as having documentary qualities, and that this is "determined as much—if indeed, not more—by social and contingent experience than by abstract codes or regulative rules of representation."[37] In other words, a fictional text can be perceived as having realistic qualities if the viewer can make connections between the text and their own knowledge or experience. In the *musicarello*'s case, however, I would argue that in addition to the cycle's self-reflexivity and its opportunities for a viewer to engage with the text, the cycle's disruption of the Hollywood musical's recurring device of dichotomies and conflict resolution also participates in the films' rendering of the social and cultural tensions in Italy's postwar period of modernization.

[37] Ibid., 273-274.

## COMPLICATING THE HOLLYWOOD MUSICAL'S CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND NARRATIVE DICHOTOMIES

The device of thematic dualities or dichotomies is utilized in many *musicarelli* to represent opposing social, economic, and cultural values of the period. These oppositions are represented almost exclusively through generational conflicts by contrasting an older generation seeking to maintain traditional values and lifestyles with young Italians. The young protagonists are usually singers or fans of the new youth music culture and are representative of modern values, such as social progress, cultural and technological innovation, and mass culture. Scholars of Hollywood musicals have identified narrative dichotomies and self-reflexive depictions of entertainment as major conventions of the genre—theorized primarily by Altman, Jane Feuer, and Richard Dyer—and these devices are similarly prevalent in the *musicarello*.[38] However, while the Hollywood films use these devices to promote harmony and reconciliation between groups with opposing values and lifestyles, the *musicarello* must be considered according to its own audience and historical context, a context I have noted in the Introduction and detail further in Chapter Two. My close analyses of the films reveals that they offer contradictory images of reconciliation, using dichotomies and self-reflexivity in a way that de-mythologizes or exposes the American musical's notion of a utopian society. Chapter Two describes this

[38] Rick Altman, "The American Film Musical: Paradigmatic Structure and Mediatory Function," 197-207. In *Genre: The Musical*, ed. Rick Altman (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul in Association with the British Film Institute, 1981), Jane Feuer, "The Self-Reflective Musical and the Myth of Entertainment" 159-172. In *Genre: The Musical*, ed. Rick Altman, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul in association with the British Film Institute, 1986), Richard Dyer, "Entertainment and Utopia," 19-35. In *Only Entertainment*, ed. Richard Dyer (London: Routledge, 1992).

phenomenon through case studies, but it is important to first understand how these devices participate in an understanding of the musical film's ideological function.

Altman theorizes that musical films began imagining harmonious societies in the 1930s and '40s to pacify Americans' concerns during and after the Great Depression.[39] Some common dichotomies that are addressed in the films are progress and tradition, work and entertainment, the individual and the community, and high and low culture. More specifically, the scholar posits that these dualities are symbolically reconciled in the Hollywood musical through the trope of heterosexual romantic coupling. In fact, he suggests that romantic plots were integral to the films because each protagonist represents one side of a duality, and their coupling is the primary way through which a musical reconciles underlying themes of societal conflict.[40] Heteronormative coupling is also common in the *musicarello*, but the films place a larger emphasis on youth ambition, leisure activities, and friendship. By focusing on youth as a social group seeking agency or freedom, the cycle's recurring dichotomies are usually represented through generational conflicts. The most prominent dualities in the cycle are independence vs. integration in a larger harmonious society, individuality vs. conformity in a consumer society, and modern vs. traditional lifestyles and perspectives about social behavior and gender roles.

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[39] Altman's text *The American Film Musical* is the first all-encompassing study on the formal features of the genre, but his exclusion of non-integrated musicals has incited critique from other scholars.

[40] Altman, "The American Film Musical: Paradigmatic Structure and Mediatory Function," 204.

The majority of the *musicarelli* associate youth with lifestyles that embrace new entertainment and consumer goods through which they could acquire self-expression and freedom outside of the home, and with changing perspectives about gender equality and mass culture. The films then contrast the young singers with parents or older figures of authority that prefer classic forms of entertainment and traditional family and gender dynamics. These oppositions can be understood more broadly as originating from a tension between innovation and tradition, in which resisting advancements in entertainment and consumer goods seemed to coincide with the resistance to modern values and societal change. Narratively, the cycle dramatizes conflicting perceptions about innovation and tradition by pairing them with different generational values and lifestyles. However, rather than truly harmonizing the two generations and their opposing values, the narrative resolutions heavily favor youth protagonists by convincing the older generation that modern culture is not threatening. This theme is especially evident in the earliest films in the cycle that I analyze in the next chapter, in which each age group's desire to succeed in the entertainment industry is a self-serving negotiation rather than an actual reconciliation of values, and in which the corporate employees (the adult generation) inevitably rely and capitalize on the young singers' talent. Similarly, the *musicarelli* from the mid to late '60s focus on a daughter or son who seeks independence through leisure and music, and who must find a way to circumvent their parent's restrictions by demonstrating the positive aspects of their lifestyle. Some of the films even advertise the youth culture to older generations as a way in which they can regain their own sense of youth. For instance, at the end of *Io bacio…tu baci* (*I Kiss…You Kiss*,

1961) a father tells his daughter (played by Mina) that he hopes he can rediscover his youth in the singers' music locale. In *Urlatori alla sbarra* (*Howlers on the Dock*, 1960) the grandfather of one of the young female leads starts wearing blue jeans and tries to dance like the *urlatori* singers, and in a similar scene in *Non stuzzicate la zanzara* (*Don't Sting the Mosquito*, 1967) Rita's mother (Rita Pavone and Giulietta Masina) requests that her daughter teach her how to dance to modern music ("la musica di oggi"). At its core, any conflict resolution between the two generations favors the young singers, and the films' illustration of how youth can gain agency through the new music culture is ultimately aligned with the way in which the cycle promoted young singers that were representative of youth entertainment and consumer goods.

It is worth noting that even as studies on Hollywood musicals are valuable for examining the Italian cycle's convention and its American influence, there are very few studies on the "rock'n'roll musical" sub-genre specifically. Despite Altman's celebrated approach to analyzing the Hollywood musical structure, he intentionally excludes American rock'n'roll musicals from his studies because they are not "integrated" musicals.[41] Integrated musicals are those that utilize songs and lyrics for narrative progression. Altman does not explain why he neglects these films from his canon, but Kelly Kessler suggests that "In addition to illuminating story and character, the process of integration pulls the musical further way from artifice of "performance.""[42] It is possible

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[41] Altman, *The American Film Musical*, 115.

[42] Kelly Kessler, *Destabilizing the Hollywood Musical: Music, Masculinity and Mayhem* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 7.

that rock'n'roll and non-integrated musicals are studied less because their use of music feels forced or unnecessary to the narrative. However, I would argue that an emphasis on artifice and theatricality is precisely why non-integrated musicals deserve more study, because depictions of performance and the blurring of fiction and reality may call upon a larger degree of spectatorial engagement with the film text. Songs in the *musicarelli* are not always related to the plot because most of them were written or even released before the film's production, but they still express a character's sentiments and reactions to events through tone (ballad, upbeat, etc.,). Furthermore, the majority of musical numbers still provide narrative development by showcasing the protagonist's progress or struggles in the entertainment industry, and thereby reinforcing the film's self-reflexivity. It is difficult to categorize the *musicarello* as either integrated or non-integrated, but they are certainly similar to American rock'n'roll films that served to promote an artist and their music, especially for Elvis Presley, and to a lesser extent Chuck Berry and Bill Haley. I would argue that the Italian films lean more toward the side of non-integration, given that they do not exhibit conventional types of musical integration (their song lyrics do not usually address narrative action). Kessler's implication that non-integrated musicals appear more artificial than their counterparts is also significant here. Since the films were star vehicles, and they often constructed a certain level of illusion in which a fictional character represented a star's persona, non-integration is an apt format through which the *musicarello* can emphasize this blurring of reality (the star) and fiction (the character) by using songs that fans may have already been familiar with prior to the film's release.

Regardless of the level of integration in rock'n'roll musicals, it is surprising that no scholar has yet analyzed the sub-genre in terms of narrative dichotomies, especially since even American rock'n'roll musicals focus on generational differences and youth representation. Barry K. Grant notes the critical lack of rock'n'roll musicals in film scholarship in 1986, in his essay "The Classic Hollywood Musical and the 'Problem' of Rock'n'Roll," but there are still few narrative and formal analyses of the musical sub-genre.[43] According to Grant, the U.S. rock'n'roll musicals that began around 1955, the majority of which starred Elvis Presley, conformed to "dominant ideology" by taming its expressions of rebellion for conservative audiences.[44] Despite the significant differences in music integration and its intended audience, the scholar claims that Hollywood rock'n'roll films did not stray far from their musical predecessors' focus on reconciliation. For example, the films' main method of conforming was their focus on community; by having "old and young people, or traditional and new values, come together with a redefinition of rock as harmless after all," the films made rock music culture appear less threatening to traditional society by promoting its "unifying power."[45] The rock'n'roll sub-genre of the American musical is closest to the Italian cycle in terms of narrative and their function as star vehicles, but unlike Grant's analysis of the Hollywood rock'n'roll films, the *musicarello* frequently display cracks within what

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[43] Barry K. Grant, "The Classic Hollywood Musical and the 'Problem' of Rock'n'Roll," *Journal of Popular Film and Television,* 13.4 (Winter, 1986): 195-205.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

initially seems to be a unified society (between age groups) by hinting at the paradoxical nature of such reconciliations.

Through contradictory and paradoxical images of conflict resolution, which I detail further through case studies in Chapter Two, the Italian films prompt questions about whether youth must conform or negotiate with their parents and/or corporate industries to maintain their desired lifestyle. This dichotomy is complicated because underneath youth's search for independence and self-discovery young consumers are also partially controlled by the productions and advertising tactics of an adult dominated industries. Altman explains,

> In many ways the musical is Hollywood's rhetorical masterwork: we pay our money for the right to have our desires predetermined, but instead of being upset at this unequal exchange we come away convinced that life is rosy, that we belong to the worldwide community of music lovers...[46]

Altman's commentary suggests that the Hollywood musical encourages passive viewership, in which a spectator does not question the happy and harmonious image they are offered on-screen. But the *musicarello* leaves viewers with an imperfect image of unity, reinforcing the way in which the films open space for viewers to engage with the text and its self-reflexivity (through a documentary consciousness). In other words, the *musicarelli* offer viewers the freedom to find their own perspective and values represented on-screen, an agency that Altman claims is not afforded to audiences of American musicals. Cracks in narratives of reconciliation highlight the complicated relationship between consumers and the industries of representation that they absorb.

[46] Altman, "Introduction", 5-6.

These imperfections also expose the way in which mass media, and especially the musical genre, constructs myths, including but not limited to Hollywood's myths of community and utopian society. According to Hanno Hardt, mass media is a producer of myth in which "Existing social or economic differences are also worked into a visualization of 'good' or 'bad,' especially in film and television, that makes for drama and teaches us lessons that reinforce conformity."[47] The *musicarello*, as in inherently unstable or hybrid form, breaks the boundaries of Hollywood musicals' devices, especially dualities/dichotomies and self-reflexive narratives, in a way that problematizes clear-cut representations of conformity and unity while unveiling the way in which entertainment and mass media serve as instruments of myth.

### EXPOSING MYTH THROUGH SELF-REFLEXIVE NARRATIVES

I have discussed how the musicarello is self-reflexive with regard to the star/viewer relationship and its documentary aesthetics, but another major component of its self-reflexive form is its narrative depiction of the entertainment industry. Plots about the entertainment industry and an aspiring singer or musician are a common narrative in musical cinema, and many of the *musicarelli* blur reality and fiction offering depictions of the entertainment culture or industry to which they belong. I theorize that these self-reflexive narratives and depictions of entertainment expose how musical films often construct myths, especially the myths frequently observed in Hollywood musicals. Before

[47] Hanno Hardt, *Myths for the Masses: An Essay On Mass Communication* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2004), 101.

discussing these myths, it is important to note that I do not claim the *musicarello* avoids myth construction, since it likely produces its own myths for its historical context and underlying ideologies. I argue instead that the cycle's especially strong sense of self-reflexivity, and its potential for increased spectator engagement with the texts, highlight or expose these 'musical myths' as fictional constructs.

There are surprisingly few theories about how musical cinema creates myths, and Jane Feuer's essay—"The Self-Reflective Musical and the Myth of Entertainment" (originally published in 1977)—remains the most detailed and referenced discussion on the topic.[48] Feuer posits that the American musical's self-reflexivity directly participates in its depiction of a utopia and harmonized society. She explains that musicals formulate myths of 1) integration, 2) spontaneity, and 3) audience participation, all of which work alongside the films' narrative dualities to construct an overarching myth that justifies the significance of entertainment in mass culture. 'Myths of spontaneity' are created when performance sequences appear as natural self-expressions of a character, thereby resembling folk art, and the 'myth of the audience' privileges the viewer's point of view during musical numbers to make them feel as though they are witnessing the performance first-hand (typically done through certain camera angles or editing choices). These two myth constructions are present in the self-reflexive *musicarelli*, but because the films intentionally link the star with their on-screen character, they may also encourage a viewer's documentary consciousness; i.e. when a character expresses themselves through

[48] Feuer, "The Self-Reflective Musical and the Myth of Entertainment," 159-176. In *Genre: The Musical*, ed. Rick Altman (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul in Association with the British Film Institute, 1981)

song and performance, viewers are reminded that they are seeing a performer on screen instead of associating the performance with the character's self-expression. Unlike other national musical cinema, most of the *musicarelli* name their protagonists after the artists themselves; for example, Rita Pavone plays characters named Rita in all of her musicals, Gianni Morandi plays Gianni Traimonti in the *In ginocchio da te* triology (1964-1965), and Little Tony plays multiple characters named Tony. Adriano Celentano even plays himself in *Uno strano tipo* (1963), a humorous film in which the star parodies his own star persona (analyzed in Chapter Three). By referencing the star's off-screen persona through similar names, dancing, performance styles, and fashion, fans are invited to imagine that they are offered an authentic representation of their favorite singers and their journey to success in the entertainment system. However, Sobchack explains that in narratives in which a celebrity is cast to play him or herself, viewers are able to identity that the character is a false representation of the star.[49] I would even argue that this device, which is similarly used in the *musicarello*, instead reinforces the cycle's underlying notions of performance that I will discuss in the following section.

Feuer describes the third myth, of integration, as the moments in which "successful performances are intimately bound up" with romantic coupling, the joining of high and popular culture, and "the integration of the individual into a community or a group."[50] However, in following chapters I will detail how the cycle's imperfect or contradictory reconciliation of social and cultural values complicates this myth of utopian

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[49] Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 264-265.

[50] Ibid., 166.

societies by showing how modern society, and even subjectivities, are diverse and fragmented. Throughout these case studies, I will illustrate how the *musicarello* presented new music and entertainment as an avenue for youth independence and for social and cultural agency, exhibiting what Feuer explains as the musical film's self-justification. She explains that the three myth types work together to justify the musical's existence, and the value of commercial cinema and institutions of mass culture within which the films are produced. Altman aptly summarizes Feuer's claim:

> Far from simply *being* entertainment these musicals are *about* entertainment; whatever the spectator's notion of entertainment may have been, these films redefine it in such a way that it cannot help be positive. … By the end of the film the spectator has been convinced that this product of big business, modern technology, and mass distribution is a downhome blend of spontaneity, togetherness, and singalong sensitivity.[51]

American musicals use positive images of entertainment as part of their myths of utopian communities and authenticity (usually connected to myths of spontaneity) to convince viewers they are part of a larger cultural community. Richard Dyer further theorizes that the musical's reconciliation of dualities is a way "to argue that the music promises utopian solutions to real-world problems", but Feuer's addition to this scholarship is a reminder that entertainment is a powerful instrument through which myths are disseminated.[52]

The *musicarello*'s strong self-reflexivity calls attention to entertainment as a producer and disseminator of myth. As Roland Barthes theorized, myth is embedded

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[51] Altman's short introduction to Feuer's essay In *Genre: The Musical*, ed. Rick Altman, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul in association with the British Film Institute, 1986), 159-160.

[52] McDonnell. "Genre Theory and the Film Musical," 250.

everywhere in our consumer society, attaching different values and status to every choice we make.[53] Musical cinema is a genre deeply tied to commercial entertainment and the culture it produces, and by offering flawless happy endings in which self-expression and spontaneity fix misunderstandings and encourage harmony, as is done in the Hollywood musical, the films naturalize their own myths of integration and perfection. In its most common form (the structure identified by film critics), the musical film revels in its own escapism by naturalizing myths and specific desires for audiences that are learning to cope with some form of transition. Barthes states that myth "abolishes the complexity of human act, it gives them the simplicity of essences, it does away with all dialectics, with any going back beyond what is immediately visible, with any going back beyond a world which is without contradictions because it is without depth."[54] However, the *musicarello*'s depiction of the entertainment industry, stardom, and postwar consumerism instead reveals (intentional or not) cracks and paradoxes in the musical's imagining of utopian communities.

The Italian films were an evident product of, and likely a participant in, the rising consumerism of the economic boom, so there is as much at stake with its representation of entertainment as with the Hollywood musical's during America's Great Depression and postwar period. Similar to the way in which hybrid and parodic cinema can be subversive, as films that reference other films and genre conventions for an ideological purpose (in Chapter Three and Four I offer examples of this in the *musicarello*), I believe

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[53] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972).

[54] Ibid., 143.

self-reflexive narratives call attention to how cinema uses fiction as an instrument of representing real social tensions and concerns, such as those represented by narrative dichotomies. And what is ultimately at stake in this dissertation is how the *musicarello* might have promoted the postwar entertainment industry and new music culture as domains through which youth can experience or perform cultural identity, consumer power, and social agency by means of these generational differences, rather than simply promoting a complete unification or harmony of opposing values. Given the degree to which the Italian musicals utilized comedy and parody, it is also important to examine how the films' comedic tone and devices aided this representation of youth empowerment and self-discovery.

### CONTEXTUALIZING THE MUSICARELLO AS A POSTWAR COMEDY

Comedy has a subversive potential, especially when used for parody or satire, but studies on Italian postwar cinema—especially during the "golden era" of the 1960s—have focused largely on *commedia all'italiana* (Comedy Italian Style) as the major comedic and satirical genre of the period. It is surprising that the cycle has escaped attention from studies on Italian comedies since many of their secondary characters—usually cast as parents or supporting characters with comedic side-plots—were also famous in previous comedic genres, and some even in the *commedia all'italiana* itself (such as Nino Taranto, Franco and Ciccio, Totò, Dolorus Palumbo, and Bice Valori). As I will note in my discussion of camp cinema and the cycle's underlying theme of identity

performance, the cycle's tropes of hybrid or fragmented youth and gender identity are used for comedic ends.

When observing the cycle's representation of changing gender dynamics and behaviors in postwar society, there are noticeable differences between the cycle and the *commedia all'italiana*'s typical gender representations and stereotyping. Both styles (the *commedia* and the *musicarello*) use comedy as a device of social criticism, addressing issues especially relevant to viewers who were experiencing or witnessing the rapid cultural and societal changes that accompanied the economic boom. However, the two film types addressed different audiences, so it not surprising that they used comedy to promote different values. While the *commedia* produced satires about the rise of consumerism through "countless unfulfilled desires and fruitless hopes of Italians during the economic miracle," the *musicarello* constructed narratives in which entertainment and consumer goods were part of a larger process of modernization and of social, economic, and cultural progress.[55] This discrepancy certainly reveals how the musicals integrated themselves into the growing system of consumerism, but despite this picaresque view of the economic boom one must remember that these films still offered empowering narratives and public recognition for young Italians.

One of the most noticeable ways in which the musical comedies are distinct from the *commedia*'s reflections of the economic boom is their alternative or non-normative representations of feminine and masculine social roles and gender dynamics—examples

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[55] Remi Fournier Lanzoni, *Comedy Italian Style: The Golden Age of Italian Film Comedies* (New York: Continuum, 2008), 49.

of which I detail throughout my case studies. Film historians have noted the substantial lack of female agency or progressive representations of women in Italian postwar cinema, which Marga Cottino-Jones accredits to cinema's continuation of previous Italian narrative tradition.[56] Luisa Farinotti notes this absence in the 1960s *commedia all'italiana* specifically, stating that the narratives usually offered male perspectives, and that even the "few exceptions used female protagonists to view changes in Italian society often by making them victims of a superficial modernity that offers them no escape from the sacred realms of the hearth."[57] Also noting the lack of female perspectives in 1960s comedies, Günsberg argues that in order for a "feminine-oriented comedy" to have been as subversive as their male-dominated counterparts the protagonist "would need to step outside of stereotypical binaries," including shifts in gender roles and using settings outside of the domestic sphere.[58] Conversely, the *musicarello*'s female representation was unparalleled in 1960s Italian cinema because the films did offer equal treatment to both male and female protagonists in comedic narratives, and their female characters demonstrate social and cultural agency within traditionally male-dominated genres—not

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[56] For example, Marga Cottino-Jones states, "Italian films do not seem to offer women a great variety of roles or to provide very progressive representations of women even when they convey a clearly sympathetic image of them as well meaning and sensitive individuals. In doing so, cinema, as an art form, seems to follow the path of representation proposed by other popular media that preceded it, such as the theatrical genres of melodrama and opera." In *Women, Desire, and Power in Italian Cinema* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 5.

[57] Luisa Farinotti, "Comedy," 109-111. In *Directory of World Cinema: Italy*, ed. Louis Bayman (Chicago: Intellect, The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 109-111.

[58] Günsberg, *Italian Cinema,* 67.

only in terms of comedic film, but Pavone also performs in a musical western parody that I detail in Chapter Four.

The early *urlatori*/jukebox films feature groups of young singers in which both young men and womene are treated as equals within the same social settings. The young women share the same public spaces and leisure activities as the male singers, and some female protagonists even hold positions of power, even if just temporarily. In *Io bacio…tu baci*, Mina actively helps save a struggling *urlatori* locale from being shut down by her father's company, and in *I ragazzi del jukebox* the daughter of a recording studio temporarily takes over the company to help her *urlatori* friends and boyfriend. Though they are less comedic than the other films in the cycle, Caterina Caselli's *musicarelli*, *Nessuno mi può giudicare* (1966) and its sequel *Perdono* (1966), emphasize female employment outside of the home as spaces in which young women can socialize and gain independence. These narratives of female employment were not entirely absent from the *commedia*, but they were still "exceptions to the rule."[59] Finally, Pavone's films are the most progressive of the cycle by depicting alternative forms of femininity with tomboy characters and cross-dressing. It is also important to note that when the female figures' share of public and leisure spaces with men, they freely dance and wear Americanized clothing without judgment. Despite some of the subtle sexualized undertones in which they reveal bare legs while dancing, the female protagonists are rarely products of the male gaze, even when they are performing on stage. This in

[59] Ibid., 62.

contrast with Natalie Fullwood's observation of 1960s *commedia* and beach comedies in which "leisure becomes overwhelmingly associated with the near-naked female body and its consumption as erotic spectacle."[60] The Italian musicals seem to attend to female protagonists and narrative points of view intentionally, and perhaps this is because the films functioned to promote young singers, many of whom were female. Nevertheless, I believe that the cycle provided new female representation while also altering notions of the "woman's film" that preceded the cycle.

The films' representation of masculinity and male social roles also diverge from the *commedia all'italiana*, its comedic tropes of hybridity (impersonation, masquerade, etc.), gender role reversals, and its portrayal of male ineptness that I explore in Chapter Three reexamine discussions of "masculinity in crisis." According to socio-historical accounts of the period, this sentiment of lost masculinity was especially common during the postwar period and was a conflict represented in media and fiction. Günsberg argues that regarding postwar comedies, "While female bodies are commodified by sexuality, male bodies are commodified by their labour power."[61] However, in the following chapters I analyze how the *musicarello*'s male characters are at times inept or vulnerable amongst authoritative women, and how they are sometimes made to be a spectacle through performance and shifted gender dynamics. These reversals and notions of theatricality seem to resist the way in which women were simply objects of the male gaze

[60] Natalie Fullwood, *Cinema, Gender, and Everyday Space: Comedy, Italian Style* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 65-66.

[61] Maggie Günsberg, *Italian Cinema: Gender and Genre* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 91.

in other postwar comedies, and they dismantle the notion that a man's primarily position of power was within traditional domains of work by supporting the family.

The films present both femininity and masculinity as performative, uncertain, and fluctuating, and this is accentuated by the fact that these representations often happen during comedic or musical sequences. Susan Sontag asserts that camp "proposes a comic vision of the world," because "the whole point of camp is to dethrone the serious and to be playful" as a means of demonstrating that everyday life and experiences are founded on artifice.[62] Within this perspective, the films can also be understood as camp cinema because they promote fluid or performative identities, and because of their underlying self-reflexive depiction of entertainment and comedic theatricality. In this next section, I will discuss more specifically how recurring comedic tropes, or tropes of hybridity—impersonation and masquerade—are devices that visualize the lurking, and at times even explicit, cracks in the cycle's gender-normative narratives. In fact, Günsberg refers to the progressive potential of such tropes in comedic film, as she believes that laughter, parody, and the masquerade are capable of challenging gender constructs by virtue of their "play on liminality."[63] Parody and comedy are also devices that can evoke laughter from otherwise serious topics such as those present in camp cinema—topics addressing notions of identity, performance, and marginalization. Much like the cycle's self-reflexivity, I examine how parody and tropes of hybrid identity are comedic devices that

[62] Ibid., 56, 63.

[63] Günsberg, *Italian Cinema*, 67.

blur reality and fiction by suggesting that identity is often an experience of performance, and often times one that is neither entirely authentic nor artificial.

### HYBRIDITY AND PARODY IN THE CAMP MUSICAL

The *musicarello*'s tropes of hybrid identity and camp ideologies are in line with its contradictory depictions of conflict resolution and images of utopia, since "the politics of camp" is similarly "opposed to the search for utopian or essentialist identities."[64] As part of the *musicarello*'s representation of youth subjectivities, recurring tropes of performative and fluid identity (parody, masquerade, doubling, and imitation) are fundamental to understanding the cycle's underlying representation of hybridity or resistance to binaries, a theme that extends the musical's underlying notion of identity as fragmented and performative. Since musical films naturally emphasize theatricality, especially in self-reflexive narratives, it is unsurprising that some film scholars (most notably Stacy Wolf and Steven Cohan) have already noted the camp undertones of the genre.[65] In these investigations of musical films as camp, discussions usually gear toward queered readings of narratives and music performance, and while I agree there is strong connection between queer and camp aesthetics, both Wolf and Cohan focus on queer and camp discourse in terms of either lesbian or gay (respectively) audience identification. These investigations are extremely valuable for examining the musical as camp cinema,

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[64] Andrew Ross, "Uses of Camp" *The Yale Journal of Criticism;* 12.1 (Fall, 1988): 19.

[65] Stacy Wolf, *A Problem Like Maria: Gender and Sexuality in the American Musical* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2002) and Steven Cohan*, Incongruous Entertainment: Camp, Cultural Value, and The MGM Musical* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

but because the *musicarello* was marketed primarily toward youth audiences it is equally important to examine how the cycle's hybrid tropes and camp aesthetics visualize gender and youth experience as performative, specifically for generation seeking self-expression during a period of cultural and social change.

Despite the cycle's largely prescriptive and felicitous endings, such as heterosexual coupling and the superficial resolution of family conflict (although I have noted that there are imperfections in these conclusions), non gender-normative youth performances are strewn throughout the films. Some of the films adhere to conservative, normative depictions of gender roles and behaviors, especially those starring Morandi, and the Bano/Powers sentimental musicals, but many others resist traditional representations of femininity, masculinity, and gendered social roles. In her text, *A Problem Like Maria: Gender and Sexuality in the American Musical* (2002), Wolf asserts that normative narratives and queer representations are not necessarily exclusive; that while Hollywood musicals and stars engage with heteronormative viewers, they can also be perceived through a queer lens for those seeking marginalized representation. Much like my analysis of the *musicarello*'s self-reflexivity and its representation of integration or reconciliation, Wolf states that "there are cracks in the image of the musical as America's finest form of escapist entertainment" that allow the genre to project different meanings and representation for audiences with different desires.[66] Many *musicarelli*, some of which I detail in Chapters Three and Four, similarly complicate seemingly

[66] Ibid., 10.

normative narratives with tropes of hybrid identity that emphasize the cycle's theatricality and camp undertone.

I analyze these tropes within broader notions of queer representation, in which different forms of identity performance (not only gender but youth performance) challenge notions of essential or binary identity. Unlike Wolf's and Cohan's discussions about the musical as queer or camp, my readings are not limited to representations of gender identity or sexuality, but they examine the *musicarello* through a queer lens. Pamela Robertson explains that camp aesthetics encourage all genders and sexualities, including women of all sexual orientations, "to express their discomfort with and alienation from the normative gender and sex roles assigned to them by straight culture," and in doing so camp becomes a queer lens though which the world is viewed, "that is, from a non- or anti-straight, albeit frequently non-gay, position."[67] Even though the *musicarello* tames images of sexuality and attends only to heteronormative relationships, it is significant that the films still offer different forms of masculinity (effeminized or ineptness) and femininity (cross-dressing, tomboys, and unruliness). Because these representations of less conservative gender behavior are so closely tied to musical performance, and thus theatricality, one can understand how the *musicarello* challenges essential identities and subjectivities by discussing the films as camp.

Film studies have addressed, albeit infrequently and without agreement, how on-screen musicals address a gendered spectatorship because of their emphasis on

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[67] Pamela Robertson, "What Makes the Feminist Camp?" 266-281. In *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject*, ed. Fabio Cleto (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 271.

performance, spectacle, and excess. John Mundy for instance claims that on-screen, visual presentations of music attend to male fantasy; that the "pleasures of the spectacle, whether in Hollywood musical or much contemporary music video, remain predominantly pleasures constructed for male eyes and ears."[68] This observation is apt for earlier films in the American genre, especially the Busby Berkeley backstage musicals that showcased female bodies as objects of spectacle in choreographed numbers, but it is unsuitable to generalize this claim to all on-screen musicals.[69] Conversely, Estella Tincknell and Ian Conrich describe the classical Hollywood musical as a feminized genre. They maintain that musical films are feminized because of their focus on female stars and "feminine interests and competencies, such as fashion," and that because the films "offer a clear space for the elaboration of feminine pleasures and directly solicits a female audience" critics have tended to undervalue the genre.[70] Aside from fashion, Tincknell and Conrich do not detail what feminine interests or pleasures the films focus on, but it is worth noting that the scholars' description is closely aligned with how film critics have defined the "woman's film," a discourse I engage with in analyses of Pavone's *musicarelli* (Chapter Four). Numerous film and theater scholars, notably John M. Clum, Alexander Doty, and D.A. Miller, consider stage and film musicals as

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[68] John Mundy, *Popular Music on Screen: From the Hollywood Musical to Music Video* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 62.

[69] Mundy states, "it is often argued that no other genre stereotypes women as savagely as the backstage musical." Ibid., 61.

[70] Ian Conrich, and Estella Tincknell, *Film's Musical Moments* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 2.

feminized, but maintain that the genre has a specifically gay (usually male) subtext and viewership because it provides imaginative and spectacularized narratives with which marginalized communities can identify.[71] Even though musicals, especially classics, are dominated by heterosexual characters, scholars such as these have focused on how musicals have "long offered personal, emotional, and cultural validation for gay men" through their utopian and performative nature and feminine excess, in other words the female star's "over-the-top rendition of femininity," with which gay men can identify.[72] A lack of agreement on if musicals are gendered (feminized) or if they address a specific spectator (straight male, female, or gay male) suggests that the genre's pronounced use of spectacle and performance inherently complicates readings of gender representation, viewer identification, and genre definition. In line with this commentary, I would argue that the *musicarello*'s pronounced use of parody and tropes of hybridity participate in the cycle's underlying destabilization or resistance of binary gender and youth subjectivity.

The *musicarello*'s chief production period was the 1960s, which according to Roy Menarini was a decade rife with parodic and intertextual film, techniques also used by hybrid cinema when referencing other texts. Menarini dedicates a lengthy section to the decade in his book, *La parodia nel cinema italiano: intertestualità, parodia e comico nel cinema italiano* (2001), explaining that the highest number of parodic films were

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[71] John M. Clum, *Something for the Boys: Musical Theater and Gay Culture* (New York: St. Martin's, 2001), Alexander Doty, *Flaming Classics: Queering the Film Canon* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010), D. A. Miller, *Place for Us: Essay on the Broadway Musical* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U Press, 1998).

[72] Wolf, *A Problem Like Maria*, 21-22.

produced in the ‘60s. He argues that this increased use of parody was due to foreign imports and the emergence of intermedial entertainment:

> Parody, a film segment that we called “meta-genre”[,] accepting Mauro Wolf’s proposal, offers the opportunity to cross different modes of cinematic story and complex systems of representation—cinema, television, theater, advertisement—that intersect in these years. [73]

The *musicarelli* are prime examples of this type of “meta-genre” entertainment during the ‘60s because of their focus on intermedial stars (those who were present in film, TV, radio, and magazine), and their reference to other film genres or conventions. In addition to hybrid media’s reflection of modernized entertainment and new processes of representation, especially within the Italian context of the economic boom, the *musicarello*’s mixing and blurring of categories contributes to its camp undertones, in the sense that they queer conventional structures and genres, especially those that often construct heteronormative imagery. Ira Jaffe asserts that “hybrid films are inherently subversive, since in mingling genres and styles instead of keeping them separate, these films choose heterogeneity over homogeneity, contamination over purity.”[74] Hybridity is often a product of and reaction to changing times and social conditions, and screen media in particular reflects these needs because it is also a powerful system of identification and

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[73] “La parodia, segmento cinematografico che abbiamo chiamato ‘meta-genere’ accogliendo la proposta di Mauro Wolf, offre l’occasione di attraversare i diversi modi del racconto cinematografico e i complessi sistemi di rappresentazione —cinema, televisione, teatro, pubblicita’—che vanno intersecandosi in questi anni”. Roy Menarini, *La parodia nel cinema italiano*: *intertestualità, parodia e comico nel cinema italiano* (Italy: Hybris, 2001), x.

[74] Ira Jaffe, *Hollywood Hybrids: Mixing Genres in Contemporary Films* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 6.

representation. If "hybrid cinema consequently emerges as a vehicle for exploring hybrid dimensions of human identity" according to modern experiences, why has there been so little study on the connection between camp and hybrid cinema?[75] My analyses of select *musicarelli* (Chapters Three and Four) aim to create space for this discourse by analyzing the cycle's use of meta-cinematic references, along with its parody, comedy, and tropes of hybrid identity.

For example, Pavone's films are musical offshoots of conventional genres that incorporate comedy, parody, and imitation to accentuate the star's disruption of female gender roles, behavior, and physicality—also present in Caterina Caselli's performances in *Nessuno* and *Perdono* to a lesser degree. My examination of Pavone's films demonstrates how her musicals recall other film genres and conventions, specifically spaghetti westerns, fairy tale narratives, and conventional definitions of the woman's film. To a certain extent all musical films are a mixture of generic conventions, but these particular *musicarelli* illustrate how hybrid cinema and parody can shed light on notions of gender or gendering, both in terms of a defining a genre and/or its conventions according to gender (a feminized genre, or a genre with a primarily female audience) in addition to non-normative representations of gender roles, behaviors, and identities.

Parody and imitation are not exclusive to structural or generic components of the films; in fact, I argue that they work alongside the *musicarello*'s tropes of hybrid identity that visually showcase parody, fluidity, and imitation. Masquerade, imitation, the

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[75] Ibid., 27.

doppelgänger, and impersonation are all narrative tropes that address notions of fragmented and fluid identity, and I argue that the *musicarelli* that use these tropes do so in a way that represents alternative depictions of femininity and masculinity. The young characters' parodic and instable representations of gendered roles and behavior are not only a reminder that modern identity is fragmented, but that identity is a performative process, especially for young viewers still experimenting with their self in process. For instance, many musical numbers in Pavone's films visualize fantasy or desire through (day)dreams, impersonation, masquerade, and child-like "play," and impersonation and doubling devices are also present in some of Adriano Celentano's and Little Tony's *musicarelli* (discussed in Chapter Three). I claim that these sequences call upon tropes of imagination and marginal spaces that are already inherent to musical films to emphasize gender and youth performativity.[76] Such tropes visualize desire in a way that illustrates how identities, especially for youth, are performative, fluid, and "hybrid" while also functioning as comedy and parody. These visualizations of hybridity are those often associated with camp, in which the mixing of boundaries and use of comedy mimic the theatricality, artifice, and playfulness of everyday life.[77]

The *musicarello*'s emphasis on performance is a significant part of its camp quality and its challenge to traditional gender constructs. In her influential essay "Notes on Camp" (1964), Sontag introduces fifty-eight components of camp. She explains that

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[76] See also Stilwell's text on diegetic music in cinema "The Fantastical Gap", 197.

[77] Susan Sontag, "Notes on Camp, 53-65. In *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject*, ed. Fabio Cleto, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008).

camp is often comedic and parodic because its main purpose is to expose the artifice and theatricality of life.[78] This theatrical essence allows fiction to highlight life as a stage;

> 10. Camp sees everything in quotation marks. It's not a lamp, but a 'lamp'; not a woman, but a 'woman'. To perceive Camp in objects and persons is to understand Being-as-Playing-a-Role. It is the farthest extension, in sensibility, of the metaphor of life as theater.
>
> …
>
> 43. Camp introduces a new standard: artifice as an ideal, theatricality.[79]

The cycle's self-reflexive depictions of entertainment and stardom at times blur the line between reality and artifice, and the film characters' resistance to traditional gender stereotypes through tropes of impersonation and masquerade proposes that the world is a stage, especially for the liminal or marginalized audiences (in this case, adolescents, teenagers, or young adults). According to Sontag and scholars that have expanded upon her discussions, camp is most relevant to homosexuals seeking representation and justification in normative societies, but camp and queer representations are valuable for anyone seeking non-normative representation. [80] Robertson explains that although camp is not generally discussed in terms of heterosexual subjectivity, its effect is relevant for both homosexual and heterosexual men and women, as it enables anyone to "express their discomfort with and alienation from the normative gender and sex roles assigned to

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[78] Ibid.,, 62.

[79] Ibid.; 56, 62.

[80] Ibid., 64.

them by straight culture."[81] Certainly one cannot assume a correlation between any comedic genre and camp cinema, but it is rather the *musicarello*'s constant reference to performance and imitation (which are also at times parodic) that reinforces the cycle's camp undertones. All musical cinema highlights performativity, but the theme is especially pronounced in self-reflexive narratives. Cinematic plots and characters that revolve around acts of performance may naturalize performativity as a normal, authentic process of self-creation and expression not only in entertainment but also in everyday life.

With obvious connections to Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, it is not surprising that current scholarship on the genre's queerness and camp aesthetics are grounded in understandings of the musical film's theatricality and artifice. [82] Wolf states that the majority of musicals can be perceived as queer, in the sense that "bodies, genders, and sexualities don't always line up."[83] I agree with this observation, but would replace "genders" with what Judith Butler describes as "gender performance," since viewers of heteronormative narratives may not ascertain or question a character's gender identity.[84] Butler explains that the three parts of "corporeality" are anatomical sex (biology), gender identity (the inner dimensions of identification), and gender

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[81] Robertson, "What Makes the Feminist Camp?", 271.

[82] For some examples see: Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies*: *Film Stars and Society* (London: Routledge, 2003), and Pamela Robertson, *Guilty Pleasure: Feminist Camp from Mae West to Madonna* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996).

[83] Wolf, *A Problem With Maria*, 24.

[84] Judith Butler, "From Interiority to Gender Performatives," 361-368. In *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject*, ed. Fabio Cleto (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 364.

performance (actions, gestures, and articulations), and that there may not be unity between the three. Despite the *musicarello*'s tames images of sexuality, by destabilizing gendered dynamics and social roles such as male incompetence and vulnerability and female masculinity, the films demonstrate that male and female bodies do not always line up with conventional notions of masculinity and femininity, but rather that gender roles and behaviors are performative and fluctuating.

My investigation of the *musicarello* as camp is founded on its emphasis on theatricality and artifice via self-reflexivity, and its use of comedy, parody, masquerade, and imitation as a means to illustrate identity as performance. These devices consequently create a "liminal mode of social transgression that uses parody and irony to upset" prevailing values and conduct, such as gender and sexuality.[85] When hybrid and camp elements work side by side, as they do in the *musicarello,* they produce representations, and perhaps even voices, for those seeking representation within a larger community. This representation is especially powerful for youth seeking to understand their place in society, and it is surprising that both American and Italian film scholarship have rarely explored the influence of camp narratives on specifically youth audiences.

## **CONCLUSION**

By examining the *musicarello* as self-reflexive, hybrid, and camp cinema, the cycle adds to current genre criticism about musical form, a scholarship that is especially

[85] Brett Farmer, *Spectacular Passions: Cinema, Fantasy, Gay Male Spectatorships* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 122.

lacking in Italian film studies. This study also seeks to further understandings of postwar comedies and gender representation. The cycle's emphasis on self-reflexivity, parody, and adaptation of overseas cinematic devices are illustrative of the way in which the postwar entertainment industry was rapidly turning to processes of intermediality and hybridity (the mixing of forms and influences) to represent a modern society. The *musicarello*'s camp undertones (its theatricality) align well with these self-reflexive depictions of how popular entertainment industry and postwar consumerism promote modern values, while paradoxically reminding viewers that consumer culture requires a certain level of conformity and dependence on a larger cultural system. Dyer astutely explains that "Camp can make us see that what art and the media give us are not the Truth or Reality[,] but fabrications, particular ways of talking about the world, particular understandings and feelings of the way life is." [86] But at the same time, much like the *musicarello*'s exposure of myth and its call for active viewer engagement, camp "stops us thinking that those who create the landscape of culture know more about life than we do ourselves."[87]

[86] Richard Dyer, "It's Being So Camp as Keep Us Going" 110-116. In *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject: A Reader*, ed. Fabio Cleto, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2008), 115.

[87] Ibid.

## Chapter Two: The Myth of Reconciliation: Generational Conflicts and Consumer Culture in the Jukebox Films

In November 1959, following the release of the first two *musicarelli*, or *urlatori* ("shouters") films, *La Stampa* journalist Antonio Antonucci reported on a meeting in Milan in which a group of employees in the entertainment industry met to condemn the young *urlatori* singers. The report proclaimed that *l'urlo*, "the yell/scream", after which the genre was named,

> is characteristic of wolves or other wild animals[,] but it is a term that has slowly lost value. The speaker that raises his voice 'yells.' The demagogue screams, he who wants to spread his ideas. All the dictators yell. That man at the television yells, he who would simply like to shout 'exactly' and does not suspect, perhaps, at what point his artificial enthusiasm becomes annoying.[88]

Finally, the reporter concluded his list with the "yelling" of Celentano's music, the iconic singer that began his career and the spread of Italianized rock'n'roll music in Milan. This account imagines the descent of the *urlo,* leaving behind its function as a political tool to become one of superficiality and annoyance, a remark that exemplifies how the media initially viewed the Americanized youth music. The 1960s marked a time of cultural and social transformation for many nations, in which teenagers' and young adults' choices in entertainment and leisure prompted moral panic and generational conflicts about traditional and modern values. The rapid shift in Italy's popular music from melodic,

[88] "L'urlo è caratteristico di lupi o altre belve ma si tratta di un termine che ha perduto man mano di valore. L'oratore che alza la voce "urla'. Urla il demagogo che vuol diffondere le sue idee. Tutti i dittatori urlano. Urla quel signore che alla televisione vorrebbe soltanto gridare "esatto" e non sospetta, forse, fine a quale punto sia fastidioso il suo entusiasmo artificiale." Antonio Antonucci, "Riuniti a Milano i seguaci della nuova moda canora: Estese al 'juke-box' le accuse che vengono rivolte agli 'urlatori.'" *La Sera*, Nov. 1959.

traditional Italian song to a genre influenced by overseas culture and changing societal values prompted concern from both the media and older Italians wanting to maintain their traditional values and lifestyles despite their nation's rapid industrialization. While the entire Italian cycle endured for a slightly over a decade, these earliest musicals were produced precisely during the midst of the economic boom; the *urlatori* films mark the origins of the *musicarello* and its participation in an emerging culture that was, for the first time, offering entertainment, goods, stars, and ample screen representation to Italian teenagers and young adults.

This chapter examines how the *urlatori* films represent the social and cultural conflicts of the postwar period through narratives focusing on generational divides. Previous scholars have referred to the films as *urlatori* films, but I have also chosen to label them as the Italian jukebox films, not only because many of them include "jukebox" in their title, but because of their representation of jukebox recording industries. The films central to this discussion, *I ragazzi del juke-box* (*The Jukebox Kids*, 1959), *Juke box – Urli D'amore* (*Jukebox-Shouts of Love* 1959), *Urlatori alla sbarra* (*Howlers on the Dock*, 1960), and a brief mention of *Io bacio…tu baci* (*I Kiss…You Kiss*, 1961), dramatize conflicts between young aspiring musicians (the *urlatori*) and one or more *matusa*, a term for old-fashioned and typically older adults, and with plots that seem to conclude with some form of generational reconciliation.

While recent scholarship has noted the *musicarello*'s recurring theme of generational divide, they usually deem the narratives superficial. Simone Arcagni comments that plots center around the conflict between the *urlatori* and *matusa*, but that

the films are ultimately “consolatory comedies” in which this generational divide is easily resolved.[89] Mauro Buzzi likewise dismisses the motif as “more supposed than real” with “hands outstretched to a suitable reconciliation.”[90] These discussions are also brief, usually limited to overarching descriptions of the *musicarello*’s basic narrative structure, but with no analysis of the nuances of this narrative motif and its socio-cultural representation. Through an examination of the film narratives, including scenes in which youth musical performance and consumer culture are contrasted with those of the *matusa*/adult generation, I argue that the films sought to legitimize youth culture and entertainment while also depicting youth as representatives of products of modernization—specifically of postwar mass culture, new sound technology, and consumerism. There has also been no study of how the cycle’s narrative devices and structure are significant components of their generational representation, and how the cycle itself exhibits cultural exchange through its narrative structure. My analyses of the *urlatori* films will show that much like the classic Hollywood musicals that preceded them, the “dual-focus narrative” and an emphasis on narrative dichotomies are major devices through which the films represent social and cultural conflicts.[91] Unlike their

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[89] “Si tratta sempre di commedie piuttosto consolotario, in cui lo scontro generazionale non diviene mai frattura.” Simone Arcagni, *Dopo Carosello: Il Musical Cinematografico Italiano* (Alessandria: Falsopiano, 2006), 122, 124.

[90] “…molto piu' supposta che reale, e invece dei pungi in tasca si offrono, ancora senza troppe pretese, mani tese a una presta riconciliazione.” Mauro Buzzi, *La canzone pop e il cinema italiano: Gli anni del boom economico (1958-1963)* (Torino: Kaplan, 2013), 102.

[91] Rick Altman, “The American Film Musical: Paradigmatic Structure and Mediatory Function,” 197-207. In *Genre: The Musical*, ed. Rick Altman (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul in Association with the British Film Institute, 1981).

American predecessors, the *urlatori* films (as well as some of the later *musicarelli*) create contradictory images of generational conflict mediation by exposing the musical genre's construction of myth about reconciliation in fragmented societies.

Aside from the explicit Americanization of youth music and entertainment, my analysis of the *urlatori* films shows how the *musicarello* may have also adapted the Hollywood musical's form for an Italian audience. While these films at first appear to imagine a world in which generational cultural and social conflicts are reconciled much like the Hollywood musicals before them, I contend that the *urlatori* films use of the dual-focus narrative and representation of dichotomies instead de-romanticizes and demythologizes the longing for such utopian mediation in an industrialized society—in an environment in which new choices for media, entertainment, and goods inevitably lead to a multitude of varied social and cultural values. Two dichotomies in particular stand out in the jukebox films, integration and conformity vs. individualism, and innovation and progress vs. tradition, both of which were tensions exacerbated by the rise in consumerism and mass media during the boom.[92] These oppositions are not only pertinent to the social and cultural context of the period, which I will discuss next, it is worth remembering that Italians also held conflicting opinions about Americanized entertainment and goods during the postwar period. According to Maria Francesca

[92] Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943-1988* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 248.

Piredda, overseas imports in Italy were perceived as artificial and demonic.[93] This view of foreign influences seems extreme, but it reflects Italian society's postwar anxieties about modernization, such as changing attitudes toward mass culture, commercialization, and Americanization.[94] Franco Minganti suggests that the *musicarello* sought to pacify Italian consumers' concerns about Americanization by resolving or deferring conflicts associated with American behavior and music while still "contaminating" the traditional values associated with of the "God-nation-family complex."[95] In other words, the films simultaneously constructed a positive image of American influence while also using these influences to represent the changing family dynamics and the modern values of the period. The *musicarello* is clearly a product that promoted and participated in cross-cultural exchange during the period, and we can understand this process further by analyzing the way in which the films incorporated devices that originated in Hollywood cinema.

Hollywood musicals that preceded the Italian cycle constructed myths of integration through narratives of reconciliation, in which an ideal society was imagined based upon the harmonization of opposing values that were representative of larger social and cultural oppositions of the period, such as integration and conformity vs.

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[93] Maria Francesca Piredda, "Alza il volume! Tecnologie, spazi e pratiche musicali dei giovani nell'industria culturale italiana tra gli anni Cinquanta e Sessanta." *Communicazioni Sociali*, 33:1 (2011): 50.

[94] Andrew Caine, *Interpreting Rock Movies: The Pop film and its Critics in Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 55.

[95] Franco Minganti, "Jukebox Boys: Postwar Italian music and the culture of covering" 148-165. *Transactions, Transgressions, Transformations: American Culture in Western Europe and Japan*, ed. Heide Fehrenbach and Uta G. Poiger (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000), 159.

individualism, innovation vs. tradition, and entertainment and leisure vs. work.[96] The jukebox films dramatize similar dichotomies by contrasting the values and actions of youth with those of the previous generation. In each of the films discussed in this chapter, the *urlatori* seek recognition from entertainment industries, and because the head of the organization is usually the father or parental figure of one of the singers, generational conflicts are directly linked to social and cultural dichotomies. These conflicts reflect the changing consumer choices and attitudes toward youth leisure activities and time spent outside of the family. In examining the film narratives and their scenes of youth gatherings and youth-targeted goods—specifically of dance scenes, live performances, the jukebox, and scooters—I show that the films depict spaces and commodities appropriated by teenagers as opportunities for both youth bonding and independence, and how these scenes are contrasted with the lifestyle and values of the previous generation.

The symbolic resolution of opposing values is complicated since the Italian films may have actually further promoted youth separation from older generations seeking to maintain traditional values and lifestyles by creating a consumer market dominated by teenagers and young adults. As the selected films will highlight, conflicting perspectives of collectiveness, conformity, independence, progress, and tradition are difficult to harmonize, but this is perhaps an accurate reflection of modern society.

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[96] Rick Altman explains that must film musicals have plots revolving around a heteronormative couple, and that "sexual dichotomy" aligns with "secondary dualities" associated with each protagonist—in other words their representation of larger opposing values. In my discussion, I refer more broadly to this notion of secondary dualities. See Altman's *The American Film Musical* (Indiana: Univ. Press, 1987), 45-58.

## Youth Empowerment through Culture and Consumerism

The three earliest *urlatori* films center around the jukebox, both as a symbol of the new youth culture and as an apparatus around which the young singers gather and unite. In *I ragazzi del juke-box* the jukebox is an omniscient narrator, in *Urli D'amore* it is a object that unifies the films' various vignettes, and finally, in *Urlatori alla sbarra* the apparatus represents the evolving entertainment industry in which the *urlatori* participate and achieve success. The stories thereby open up discussions on how postwar mass media (television, film, and portable music devices) was not only beginning to recognize youth in an industry previously dominated by adult characters, but how it was finally addressing teenagers and young adults as a distinct consumer group by promoting goods, sound technology, and entertainment to a specifically youth audience, and all of which can be symbolized by the jukebox.

As an instrument of modernization and innovation, the jukebox had an integral role in the creation of a distinct postwar Italian youth culture and the commercialization of popular entertainment during the economic boom. The apparatus was imported from America at the end of WWII and led to the widespread diffusion of overseas rock'n'roll in Italy, and was soon followed by of the Italian-made cinebox—a jukebox with videos that preceded the contemporary music video.[97] Many young Italians embraced the postwar innovations in music and sound technology since they enabled youth to express their individuality, consumer power, and separation from their parents' values and

[97] Piredda, "Alza il volume!" 60.

lifestyles. The jukebox, and soon after the transistor radio, made it possible to listen to music outside of the home. Portable entertainment allowed teenagers the opportunity to establish close communities outside of their family unit, for the first time discovering a place for themselves in public spaces (small underground or independent locales and music venues, nightclubs, and music festivals) and in popular culture.[98]

Meanwhile, older generations perceived the new music culture as a threat to Italian society because of its rebellious connotations in overseas culture. Common opinion was that "the jukebox and popular songs" were seen "as a sign of barbarity and apathy,"[99] while classical and traditional melodic genres were preferred for their stable and ritualistic sound.[100] The early films' use of the jukebox as a symbol or image of a generation seeking economic and social independence thus recalls how the apparatus was associated with processes of modernization, such as cross-cultural exchange, advancements in technology, increased leisure time. He the image of the jukebox also recalls how rock'n'roll culture, even outside of America, offered spaces in which youth openly fought for economic independence, self-expression, and sexual liberation. The move toward more progressive values and lifestyles consequently created a rift between

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[98] Ibid., 58.

[99] "I juke box e le canzonette sono visti da molti come segno di imbarbarimento, di qualunquismo." In Stefano Della Casa, *Il professor Matusa e i suoi hippies: Cinema e musica in Italian negli anni Sessanta*, ed. Stefano della Casa and Paolo Manera (Roma: Bonanno, 2011), 17.

[100] Alessandro Carrera, *Musica e pubblica giovanile: l'evoluzione del gusto musicale dagli anni Sessanta ad oggi*. (Milan: Feltrinelli Economica, 1980), 23.

the younger and older generations, the latter seeking to reinstate traditional values, pre-fascist, about family dynamics, leisure, and consumerism.

The conflicting social and cultural values represented in the *musicarello*'s provide insight into how the changing socio-economical environment affected teenage and young adult mentality. Concurrent with the rapid rise with which families acquired luxury items such as televisions, cars, and home appliances, there was a rise in Italian consumerism during the boom that led to innovations—the jukebox and scooters—that encouraged young citizens to spend more time outside of the home. Remi Fournier Lanzoni notes that the consumer lifestyle had become "embedded in Italian quotidian life with its newly implemented supermarkets, cigarette vending machine, public phones, beach bars equipped with jukeboxes, discotheques, etc."[101] These goods were primarily marketed to youth audiences, especially those related to music and rock'n'roll culture. For example, between 1958 and 1964, the years concurrent with the emergence of the *musicarello*, around 80% of the goods delivered by Italian record companies were marketed to teenagers, leading to a rise in jukebox acquisitions (from 4,000 to 15,000) for public spaces where young Italians often spent their free time.[102] Changes in the education system in the early 1960s, especially the requirement that students stay in school until at least the age of 14, also allowed for more leisure time because of their delayed entrance

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[101] Remi Fournier Lanzoni, *Comedy Italian Style: The Golden Age of Italian Film Comedies* (New York: Continuum, 2008), 54.

[102] Stephen Gundle, "Adriano Celentano and the Origins of Rock and Roll in Italy," 367-86. *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 11.3 (2006): 372.

into the workforce.[103] Luca Gorgolini asserts that both an increase in leisure time and schooling permitted teens and adolescents more time spent with peers and developing common interests and lifestyles.

Increased leisure time and youth bonding also meant that kids were "favoring the emergence of social relationships outside of the nuclear family" and relying on consumer goods and transportation (cars, scooters, and buses) to create "their own cultural identity."[104] Social-historian Paul Ginsburg details the affects of the boom on the family unit and the disintegration of traditional values; "urban youth was freer than ever before," and "the old patterns of authority and dominance were rapidly breaking down, if not between men and women, at least between young and old."[105] Teens were finally finding freedom outside of the home, but this in turn created tensions between parents and their children. These conflicts were heightened, if not partially caused by, youth preference in entertainment and leisure activities, especially since older generations viewed rock'n'roll music and Americanization as threatening to Italian culture, the idea of national identity, and youth society. Despite that the *urlatori* films' seem to mediate generational differences, the contradictions and cracks within their representations of reconciliation suggest that adults were justified in their concern about youth consumer power. Traditional values were at stake with the burgeoning generation, especially those

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[103] Luca Gorgolini, "Pratiche e luoghi dei consumi giovanili negli anni Sessanta," 83-94. *Memoria e Ricerca*. Vol 23, (2006): 85.

[104] "favorisce l'emergere di una socialità esterna al nucleo familiare", "al fine di dotarsi di una propria identità culturale." Ibid., 85.

[105] Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy,* 249.

advocated by the Christian Democracy and those censoring public media at the time—the maintenance of the nuclear family structure and positions of authority, and conservative views of sexuality and women's rights.

The fact that the films were written, directed, and produced by the very generation that the cycle's youth audience and singers were contrasted with may seem problematic, but much like the film narratives themselves, in which the commercial entertainment industry negotiates with the young musicians for financial gain, there was also a symbiotic relationship between the *musicarelli* directors and their youth audience. Interviews from the period reveal that some of the directors, especially Fulci (*Urlatori alla sbarra*, *Ragazzi del juke-box*) and Vivarelli (*Io bacio tu baci*, *Rita la figlia americana)*, were dedicated to the values of the new music culture. Both directors are noted as having been pro-modernization, as activists of the "modern life."[106] Alex Marlow-Mann states, "the *musicarello* and the emergent youth culture provided a number of directors with left-wing or anti-conformist beliefs—above all, Fulci and Vivarelli—with a platform for their ideals."[107] In addition to being two of the pioneers of the *musicarello*, the directors wrote three of Celentano's early hit singles ("Il tuo bacio e' come un rock" [1959], "24000 baci" [1961], and "non esiste l'amore" [1961]), two of which were performed in their *musicarelli.* The first performance sequence in *I ragazzi del juke-box* features "Il tuo bacio è come un rock," and it is a particularly memorable

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[106] Della Casa, *Il professor matusa*, 25.

[107] Alex Marlow-Mann, "Italy," 80-91. In *The International Film Musical*, ed. Corey K. Creekmur and Linda Y. Mokdad (Edinburgh: University Press, 2012), 87.

performance in the cycle's history because it was the first time audiences saw an *urlatore* perform on-screen.[108] Stefano Della Casa explains that the Fulci's and Vivarelli's lyrics were innovative and contemporary for the period because they combined themes from traditional Italian music (kissing and love) with subjects such as youth rebellion and independence.[109] During the *musicarello*'s later years, Gianni Morandi stated that Ettore M. Fizzarotti, the leading director of the mid to late-1960s *musicarelli*, and Aldo Grimaldi were also committed to the films on a personal level, stating, "they really believed in us, they didn't make the films for the money."[110]

Vivarelli was also an important contributor to the music magazine *Big*, another form of mass media that participated in the creation of a postwar youth consumer demographic. Music magazine and fanzines worked alongside the *musicarello* to promote the Americanized music and young Italian musicians, and more significantly, it contributed to cultural spaces specific to young Italians. Jacopo Tomatis describes the strength with which music bonded young Italians in 1960s and how it supplied them with opportunities for community building, as evidenced by the emergence of popular music magazines, most notably *Ciao Amici* and *Big*:

> The increasing success of *Ciao amici* and *Big* reflected the great innovations around Italian teenagers' music practices. Teenagers shared their records and listened to music together. Hence, music became the central element of a new

[108] Buzzi, *La canzone pop*, 95.

[109] Ibid., 26.

[110] "…in questi film Fizarotti e Grimaldi ci credevano davvero, non li facevano per far soldi." In Sergio M. Germani, Simone Starace, Roberto Turigliatto, *TITANUS: Cronoca familiare del cinema italiano* (Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia and Edizioni Sabinae, 2014), 379.

> way of gathering, as well as the cornerstone of a new ideology of the youth community. The field of a so-called *musica nostra* (music of our own) was defined, which included 'young' genres such as the *cantautori*, the *urlatori* and especially beat and folk music.[111]

Even though *Ciao Amici* and *Big* were not founded until 1963 and 1965, respectively, they could not have originated without an already substantial public demand for the new music styles. Tomatis explains that the two magazines reacted to the demand of those passionate for the "*musica nostra*" by reinforcing a sense of belonging through organized music festivals and fan networks (clubs and associations). This growth in available music sources and associated activities highlights is an important component of how young Italians created a shared lifestyle that was separate from their parents, one that was based on the current music culture and their withdrawal from domestic spaces.

Like the *musicarello*, music magazines were initially manufactured for but not by young Italians, a common paradox for most popular entertainment industries, but despite the industry's commercial intent it is important to remember that mass media and consumerism were and still are avenues for youth to create spaces of their own. As Stephen Gundle argues, it is a wrong to "view the popularity of American-inspired music and fashions as a sign of passive integration. Rather, such things provided youth with a clear-cut means to identify with the new and the modern, as well as a channel for the formation of cultural preferences different from those of older people."[112] In fact, Marco

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[111] Jacopo Tomatis, "'This is our music': Italian Teen Pop Music and Genres in the 1960s," 24-42. *Journal of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music*, 4, no 2. (2014).

[112] Stephen Gundle, *Between Hollywood and Moscow: the Italian Communists and the Challenge of Mass Culture, 1943-1991* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 110.

Grispigni suggests that the 1960s mass-marketed youth magazines and fanzines may have even led teens to eventually create their own media sources and self-representation, the "stampa giovanile" (youth journalism).[113]

It is clear that those involved with the films made efforts to connect with their target audience through similar values, but it also addresses a topic rarely noted in studies about new forms of postwar entertainment, that the conflict between traditional and modern values was not exclusive to differences in age. This is perhaps one reason for which the *musicarelli* may have offered complicated narratives of reconciliation, to imply that generational divisions were not clear-cut, especially during a period in which other mass media depicted them as such. Western societies, not just in Italy, entered into a moral panic that associated rock'n'roll culture and modernized goods with youth delinquency and radicalism, but much of this panic in Italy seems to have been instigated by the media itself. Piero Paolo Pasolini openly critiqued the jukebox as an object of Americanization, he "defined Rome's jukeboxes (along with pinball machines) as America's continuation of the war with other means," and although it was never produced on-screen, his film script *La Nebbiosa* dramatizes Milanese teddy boys as morally corrupt.[114] However, Bill Osgerby posits that youth delinquency in the U.K. and the U.S was not actually a valid concern, and that their real preoccupation was with the social fragmentation that followed WWII—the belief that entertainment led to

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[113] Marco Grispigni, "S'avanza uno strano lettore la stampa giovanile prima del '68," 55-70. In *Giovani prima della rivolta*, ed. Marco Grispigni and Paola Ghione (Italy: Manifestolibri, 1998).

[114] Minganti, "Jukebox Boys," 159., Pier Paolo Pasolini, *La Nebbiosa* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 2013).

delinquency "was just a statistical phenomenon."[115] Although Osgerby does not address the Italian context, I believe his observation is relevant for media representations of youth in Italy. Articles from *La stampa* between 1958 and 1959 reveal the extent to which the press exaggerated youth moral degeneration. Many of the search results for "urlatori," "teddy-boy," "jukebox," and the titles of the *musicarelli* releases are not just announcements for performances and theater showings, there are also accounts of city meetings in which officials (sometimes police) expressed their concern for youth delinquency and hooliganism ("*teppismo*"*)*. These media critics and reported officials scorned the harsh sounds of the jukebox and rock'n'roll and published stories about youth mischief, but rarely about actual youth violence. Accounts of youth misbehavior were often reports about other countries like France and Denmark.[116] Any threat of a fallen youth seems to have been founded largely on skewed media representation. Likewise, Carlo Alberto Chiesa's 1960 episodic documentary series that aired on RAI, *Giovani d'oggi*, described youth from a harsh and biased light, implying that all young Italians were problematic.[117] Perhaps the real fear of the Italianized rock'n'roll stemmed from the music culture's political and social ramifications, not because it fractured society, but because it encouraged marginalized individuals to discover independence through the tools provided by consumerism and mass culture.

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[115] Bill Osgerby, *Youth Media* (London: Routledge, 2004), 71.

[116] *La Stampa,* September, 3, 1959.

[117] Mauro Morbidelli, "'Posso dire una parola?…' I Giovani dentro e davanti la TV" 179-186. In *Giovani prima della rivolta*, ed. Marco Grispigni and Paola Ghione (Italy: Manifestolibri, 1998), 182.

Consumers of the youth-targeted music and cinema may not have been aware of their impact on Italy's economy, but their cultural participation is apparent when considering that their choices dominated the popular music industry and its associated goods between 1959-1963, as evidenced in the drastic switch in melodic/traditional to rock'n'roll/jazz inspired artists at San Remo and on TV programs.[118] The intermedial success of the music culture (in television, cinema, and record sales) and the rising production of goods marketed specifically to youth consumers, like scooters and attire, are also indicative of the large influence Italian teenagers had on the entertainment industry. Although it has yet to be fully investigated, it is possible that this new lifestyle was a significant contribution to promoting youth collaboration and political ambition that led the '68 revolts.[119]

## INTEGRATION VS. INDIVIDUALISM: THE MYTH OF COMMUNITY IN THE DUAL-FOCUS NARRATIVE

There are differing theories about how musical films offer utopian visions of society by reconciling dichotomies represented by paralleled and contrasted social groups, or through specific types of myth formation (which I discussed in the previous chapter), but it is clear that much of musical cinema addresses notions of an ideal society

[118] For statistics and a detailed history of this phenomenon see Roberto Agostini's transcription of "Change and Continuity in Italian Mainstream Pop: A Study on Sanremo Festival in the 50s & 60s" from the International Association for the Study of Popular Music general meeting in Rome 2005, 11-35. http://www.iaspm.net/archive/IASPM05LIGHT.pdf

[119] Gorgolini suggests that progressive musicians, such as Caterina Caselli, Patty Pravo, and Rita Pavone, promoted lifestyles and sentiments that promoted generational conflicts, which he believes may "represented for many the path toward" the revolts. In Gorgolini, "Pratiche e luoghi", 68.

in terms of reconciling values during periods of national change. I do not believe there is one singular method with which the musical film depicts a utopian society, but that the genre's narrative devices and its unique and fantastical form lend itself especially well to the representation of ideals and to the construction of myths. According to Jane Feuer, the American musical's myths of integration, audience participation, and spontaneity (detailed in the previous chapter) work together to create a larger myth in which entertainment is self-justified. The Italian musical similarly demonstrates how entertainment and its associated consumer culture can be harmonizing, as reflected in its depiction of youth collective gathering. However, at the same time, the films' contradictory representations of generational reconciliation reveals cracks in these myths of integration by recalling the tensions between tradition and post-war modernization—in other words, between the recovery of a collective, pre-fascist nation while also learning to keep up with industrialization and the economic boom.

The *urlatori* films portray generational reconciliation during the economic boom as self-serving, a mutual relationship in which both parties (youth and adults) must work together for economic gain or social status. And any sense of generational harmony is fissured by the films' emphasis on youth bonding in their search for independence outside of the home. The dramatization of young Italians separating themselves from their parents' generation is a recurring narrative motif through which the films address the duality of integration vs. independence, and in doing so the *musicarelli* suggest that teenagers must ultimately rely on their peers for amusement, mobility, and freedom rather than depicting an authentic reconciliation between generations. The conflicts between

individualism/independence and conformity/integration are reconciled only superficially, and the cycle's incorporation of American music and culture and the Hollywood musical's form is not simply a process of imitation and cross-cultural exchange, it unveils musical cinema's construction of myths about integration and utopian societies.

The dual-focus narrative is the primary device through which societal tensions and conflicts are dramatized. The films contrast and parallel scenes focusing on young aspiring singers with those featuring middle-aged employees of the entertainment industry (some of whom are also parental figures) as two groups embodying conflicting social and economic values. Unlike most film genres that construct linear narratives, Altman explains that musical films create a "dual-focus narrative" by contrasting and paralleling the scenes and experiences of the film's male and female protagonists; the characters are love interests and usually belong to different social groups and represent conflicting values and desires.[120] Unlike the classic Hollywood musical's emphasis on romantic coupling, the *musicarello*'s dualities are manifest through relationships between parents and children, or more broadly between adults and young Italians. While there is narrative investment in the heteronormative boy/girl teenage romance, the dramatization of the changing family dynamics, leisure, and consumerism in the Italian context is far more effective in the cycle's paralleling of generational groupings. A defining feature of the jukebox films is their showcase of a group of musicians working together to achieve fame rather than featuring one specific performer like the later *musicarelli* (those

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[120] Rick Altman, "Dual-Focus Narrative", 55-98. In *A Theory of Narrative*, ed. Rick Altman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

featuring Gianni Morandi, Rita Pavone, Caterina Caselli), and this characteristic that lends the films particularly well to the Hollywood musical "dual-focus" narrative. By alternating and paralleling the scenes of two groups with conflicting values, "individuals serve primarily as placeholders defined by the group, rather than as characters whose development constitutes an independent subject of interest."[121] As my analyses will illustrate, the dual-focus narrative's paralleling of characters that represent larger cultural or social groups is a significant part of how musical films generate myths of integration and collectivity.

An underlying contradiction in the American musical (especially the 1950s youth rock'n'roll films) that is exposed in the *urlatori* films is the belief that individuals of different generations and/or social groups can, and should be, happily integrated into a larger unified community. This is an especially complicated notion for youth who are often simultaneously seeking individuality and independence from previous generations while looking for affirmation with peers that share similar cultural spaces. At the same time, youth are often treated as one unified consumer demographic despite their search for individuality. Tomatis recognizes that "youth of the 1960s seem to be lumped together as one generic 'youth class,' rather than described in terms of different classes or subcultures" by contemporary social-historians.[122] It is important to remember that just like any other age group young Italians were not a cohesive group.

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[121] Ibid., 55.

[122] Tomatis, "This is our music."

The dichotomy of integration and individualism in the *musicarelli* recalls the complicated relation between reconciliation while maintaining one's individuality and personal freedom. John Mundy observes that in American rock'n'roll musicals there is a paradox hiding underneath narratives in which youth desire freedom from parental authority, because in order to adopt their ideal lifestyle they needed financial support, "the simultaneous desire to be both rebellious and conformist."[123] An attempt to harmonize conformity and freedom seems contradictory, but Mundy maintains that it was at the very least a way for these concerns to be made public. According to Altman's theory about dichotomies, "By reconciling terms previously seen as mutually exclusive, the musical succeeds in reducing an unsatisfactory paradox to a more workable configuration, a concordance of opposites."[124] The distinct reconciliation of generational disparities in the early *musicarelli* was and will probably never be fully realized, both due to the above paradox and due to the differences in each generation's social and cultural experiences. However, the uniqueness of *urlatori* films is their focus on negotiation rather than absolute reconciliation, a more realistic depiction of "workable configurations" of conflict in a fragmented society. Gorgolini explains that compared to the previous generation that wanted to contribute to Italy's postwar reconstruction, both morally and materially, the following generation maintained a different lifestyle because

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[123] John Mundy, *Popular Music on Screen: From the Hollywood Musical to Music Video* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 99.

[124] Rick Altman, "The American Film Musical: Paradigmatic Structure and Mediatory Function," 197-207. In *Genre: The Musical,* ed. Rick Altman, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul in association with the British Film Institute, 1986), 207.

they grew up in a less stressful environment.[125] At the same time, any attempt to pacify conflicting values associated with each age group (innovation/tradition, work/entertainment, high/low culture, capitalism/counterculture), at least narratively, is an admirable aim for a period in which many citizens were unsure of how to handle the rapid onset of industrialization and changing lifestyles.

Rather than portraying youth bonding and collectiveness with protagonists that represent specific demographics, many of the early films include characters with varying economic backgrounds and origins. Differences in class, education, and consumer experiences were evident in all generations due to the inequality between industrial and agricultural regions, and the *musicarello* reflected this diversity by setting the films in both southern and northern cities, and by including characters with varied wealth and upbringings. Giachetti explains that jukebox and beat music cultures created opportunities for teenagers to form bonds that would soon lead to social, political, and occupational subcultures; they "formed a transversal identity that horizontally cut through the classes, professional and social, that made common the worker and the student, those who lived in the city and those in provincial areas."[126] Not only do the narratives negotiate or mediate (note that I do not use the term reconcile here) generational cultural and social differences by legitimizing youth entertainment as financially successful, they visualize collective spaces for teenagers of different classes and origins by focusing on

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[125]Gorgolini, "Pratiche a luoghi," 85.

[126] "Si formava un'identità trasversale che tagliava orizzontalemente ceti, professioni e classi sociali, che accomunava l'operaio e lo studente, chi abitava in città e chi in provincia." Giachetti, "Giovani in movimento," 35.

how rock'n'roll culture promotes a sense of belonging, especially through dance and leisure activities. The *urlatori* films are particular noteworthy because this diversity is also highlighted within the same group of friends and aspiring musicians. For example, in *I ragazzi del jukebox* a struggling nightclub owner dates the daughter of a well off recording studio manager, and Paolo's financial troubles are resolved when his venue joins forces with her father's studio. One of *Urli d'amore*'s vignettes features Calogero and Domenica, two protagonists who are separated because of their family origins (southern and northern) and who overcome their parents' resistance to the relationship. And in *Io bacio…tu baci*, an executive of a real estate agent wants to buy out a locale frequented by and housing a group of *urlatori* singers; Mina is cast as the company's daughter and decides to help the locale raise their profits in order to avoid eviction and the property transfer. As part of the *musicarello*'s rendering of youth bonding and agency in social environments and industries dominated by adults resisting modern values, the films' multitude of character types may have offered a progressive image of national identity founded on the acceptance of diversity.

In their myths of integration and collectiveness, the following analyses will show how the jukebox films contrast middle-aged employees or employers of the entertainment industry with young musicians, and their eventual 'reconciliation.' On one hand, the musicians and teenagers are allotted cultural territory through media coverage that is both advantageous and harmful for their reputations, and it is clear that the entertainment industry controlled by older generations preferring traditional/melodic music negotiates with the young musicians because of the new music's popularity and potential capital. On

the other, the films emphasize self-expression and communal nature of music through scenes of youth gathering, which likely further promoted the music as an avenue of youth empowerment. My analyses focus on how the films visualize youth bonding and authenticity/spontaneity by their of contrasting of dance and performance sequences of young Italians with those of adults working in entertainment industries. Scenes featuring dancing and live music, especially in public spaces, emphasize the connection between music and corporeal or emotional reaction to showcase the spontaneous, and therefore more authentic, essence of the new entertainment culture.

Showcasing music as form of expression, freedom, and bonding addresses desires for amusement, independence, and mobility—longings that exists for all age groups. Classic American musical films and the *musicarelli* are, however, anything but spontaneous. Most if not all of the performance sequences are completed post-production, and this is especially evident in the *musicarello* cycle since songs were poorly dubbed, likely due to low budgets. There is no assumption that viewers will consider the musical's form an accurate representation of reality, but its myth of spontaneity is rather the use of "spontaneous self-expression through song and dance" to represent "a joyous and responsive attitude toward life."[127] Despite the sense of authenticity the films associate with the new music genre, the films expose the myth-like nature of reconciliation between generations while offering no clear solution for the in-between space in which youth consumers find themselves—between desiring

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[127] Jane Feuer, "The Self-reflective Musical and the Myth of Entertainment," 159-176. In *Genre: The Musical*, ed. Rick Altman (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul in Association with the British Film Institute, 1981), 162-163.

independence and conforming to or integrating into a system of commercial entertainment. The film conclusions are thus embedded with an underlying sense of contradiction, producing ambiguous portraits of reconciliation that deconstruct the myths previous musicals often promoted.

### *I RAGAZZI DEL JUKE-BOX* (1959)

*I ragazzi del juke-box* was the first film in the cycle, co-written by Lucio Fulci and Piero Vivarelli and directed by Fulci, and featured many of the young music icons of the period—Adriano Celentano, Mina, Betty Curtis, and Tony Dallara. It is also the first of many *musicarelli* that present generational conflicts in terms of a parent/child relationship; for example, *Urlatori alla sbarra* (1960), *Io bacio … tu baci* (1961), *Una lacrima sul viso* (1964), and *Rita la figlia americana* (1965) all focus specifically on a father/daughter conflict, in which the daughter convinces her father that *urlatori* and rock'n'roll music are not threatening.

The film follows a group of young musicians influenced by American rock'n'roll and popular jazz (Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin etc.) at an independently owned bar for a young clientele. The performances, ambitions, and overall lifestyles of the aspiring musicians are contrasted with those of a melodic music producer, Commendatore Cesari (Mario Carotenuto), who is the film's leading *matusa* figure. Betty (Curtis) introduces the antagonist as "il nostro nemico numero uno, l'editore Cesari. Uomo antico, tradizionalista" ("our number one nemesis, the editor Cesari. An old-fashioned, traditional man"). Cesari and his employees work within the entertainment industry

acquiring new talent and trying to release commercially successful melodic singles. The aspiring young artists, who I will refer to as the *ragazzi*, instead prefer to support their independently run venue by performing for audiences that are genuinely engaged in their music. Despite being the daughter of the corporate money-driven Cesari, Giulia (Elke Sommer) is a fan of rock'n'roll and jazz music and spends much of her free time at the locale and dating its owner Paolo (Anthony Steffen/Antonio De Teffè). Generational differences in music lead to conflicts in which the young singers that value authentic artistry and self-expression must find a way to support themselves (i.e. their integration) in an industry dominated by employers/ees that are only interested in economic success and traditional music. This conflict is seemingly resolved through a negotiation between the two groups, but the film makes it clear that in matters of popular culture, youth consumers and artists will always have the upper hand.

The film's opening sequence immediately introduces the theme of generational difference with a close-up of a jukebox and a narration that associates youth culture with modern and americanized entertainment. A close-up of a pinball machine is quickly followed by an image of the jukebox, and as a record spins an omniscient narrator introduces himself. A male voice exclaims, "One moment! It's fine if my name isn't in the credits, but the true protagonist of this story is me! Yes, the jukebox, the automatic distributor of the musical dreams of our time; the cousin of the flippers, the supposed father of the burned, roasted, and toasted youth of the modern era."[128] In referencing a

[128] "Un momento! Va bene che il mio nome sui titoli non c'era, ma il vero protagonista di questa storia sono io! Sì, io il jukebox, il distributore automatico dei sogni musicali del nostro tempo; io il cugino dei flippers, il padre putativo di tutta la gioventù bruciata, arrostita, tostata dell'era moderna."

“burned” youth (“gioventù bruciata”), the narrator recalls the 1955 U.S. production of *Rebel Without a Cause—Gioventù bruciata* in Italy—famous for its depiction of young Americans as apathetic and morally astray. This reference is a reminder of the influence of overseas entertainment on Italian popular culture, as well as how media (not only in Italy, but also in the U.S., the U.K., France, and other nations during the 1950s-60s) frequently depicted teenagers as a perceived threat to modern society, a moral panic that contributed to the generational rifts between parents and their children. The final proclamation of the narrator’s introduction, that he is “supposedly” the father of a degenerative youth, strengthens the jukebox’s sarcasm, not only about the widespread parental and adult fear that rock’n’roll was disruptive to their children, but that the jukebox was to be blamed for this new culture.

The theme of generational divide is then fully dramatized in the following sequences when music icons are positioned in a cultural battle. The personified jukebox provides exposition by recounting a history of the film’s fictional setting, the region of “Festavalia,” accompanied by a scene in which rock’n’roll singer Adriano (Celentano) rudely yells and interrupts Appio Claudio’s public media conference held by Cesari’s company. Appio is a traditional melodic singer under contract with Cesari’s studio; the character is an overt parody of Claudio Villa, as well as of the Roman censor Appio Claudio (Appius Claudius, 340-273 BC), a satire on the influence of music icons on societal values. As security guards drag the young singer out of the room, the scene abruptly cuts to the first musical number of the film at the underground locale La Fogna (“The Cesspit,” or a place of corruption, again sarcastically noting the *urlatori*’s

reputation as corrupters). Celentano performs his hit single of that year, "Il tuo bacio è come un rock" ("Your Kiss is Like a Rock"), as the camera pans to a sign stating "Please do not request festival songs because the band that's performing is armed."[129] This sign is a snub at commercial entertainment marketing by referencing the popular musical festivals of the period, such as San Remo, in which artists promoted their music through competitions; however, it is also ironic since many of the singers in this film actually acquired fame through these same festivals, and it foreshadows the negotiation that the *ragazzi* themselves eventually make with the recording studio. There are verbal references to a "battle" between the *ragazzi* and Villa throughout the rest of the film that emphasize a generational divide based on the assumption that Villa's fans were usually older or those unwilling to accept new entertainment.

As part of its dual-focus narrative, musical performances and scenes chronicling talent acquisitions are paralleled to highlight the two groups' (youth and corporate adults) conflicting views about community and musical authenticity; more specifically, illustrating the young singers' commitment to using music as an avenue for self-expression and audience engagement via live performances. Just after Celentano's first performance in the film, another young singer, Tony Bellaria (Dallara), is dressed in a pinstripe suit and tie and awkwardly wanders into La Fogna in search of the owner. Tony tells Paolo he hopes to eventually sing at *La Scala* opera house, but that he is currently seeking any performance opportunities. To ameliorate the club's financial troubles Paolo

[129] "Ai prega di non chiedere canzoni dei festivals perché la banda che suona è armata!"

tricks Tony into paying a fee for his contract, but the *ragazzi* push the new member on stage encouraging him to sing while the crowd cheers him on. Adriano hands Tony's sheet music to the band members and a humorous musical number ensues in which Tony sings a rift of "Largo al factotum" ("Make Way for the Factotum" from Rossini's opera the *The Barber of Seville*) accompanied by the band's rock'n'roll rendition. The crowd applauds furiously and carries Tony through the crowd on their shoulders. By remixing an Italian aria with a more modern, popular music style, Dallara becomes a unique character in the film by symbolizing acceptance, diversity, and americanized entertainment, while still offering conservative audiences a less-threatening version of the *urlatori*. This character mirrors Dallara's own star persona, as a consolatory figure of the new music genre who, "with his modesty and sobriety, showed how youthful exuberance and enthusiasm did not necessarily imply the alleged vulgarity and excesses of the most reckless yellers."[130] Tony and the band members are able to blend genres to revise an old song in contrast with Cesari, who according to Paolo "ha le orecchie troppo sensibili per questo genere" ("has ears too sensitive for this genre"). Although Tony's contract is initially created for financial reasons, it is done for La Fogna's survival as an independent music venue existing in culture in which entertainment is dominated by the profit-seeking recording industries. The dilemma between conformity and independence or originality recalls the same paradoxical conflict in which youth seeking independence often still need their family's financial support.

[130] Agostini, "Change and Continuity," 30.

Cesari's production of hit singles is also financially motivated, but his approach is inauthentic compared to the *ragazzi*'s spontaneous and integrative discovery of new artists; the audience encouraged Tony and decided whether he was talented rather than it being the sole decision of the club owner. The sequence that follows Dallara's performance again parallels the *urlatori* with the *matusa* by showing how Cesari's company determines a song's popularity. The producer tells an employee that popular music consists of songs that make one feel tormented and suffering, "Il pubblico vuol piangere, vuole le lacrime!" ("Listeners want to cry, they want tears!"), a sentiment he claims the "shameful" Jukebox music does not appreciate. Rather than valuing audience reception as the young singers do, Cesari's entire business strategy is based on how many tears his professional crier, "il lacrimatore," records during each song-listening, every teardrop representing an expected "10,000 lira" of revenue. By associating financial success with tears and emotional distress, Cesari's strategy is a sarcastic commentary on how the industries and promoters of melodic music sought to exploit public consumers through emotion rather than choosing musicians whose performances emphasize self-expression. This parody also reveals that even though fans of melodic music may have believed they had superior taste in music because of the style's traditional or classical roots, that it was just as commercialized as the emerging youth genre.

The *ragazzi* gain more fans through live performances that encourage audience participation, unlike Cesari's production of sheet music and studio recordings destined largely for in-home listening—and viewers never see any actual audience or fan base for Cesari's music releases. Live performance (albeit only diegetically) is a recurring trope

within all of the *urlatori* films and many later *musicarelli* that emphasizes communal or participatory engagement for both musicians and performers. All of Celentano's performances in this film (and in *Urlatori alla sbarra*) begin abruptly in *media res*, with no narrative framing and with both listeners and performers already moving on the dance floor. This structure resembles how a viewer would experience a performance if they walked into a venue and happened upon a live show. Celentano is always positioned in the middle of the dance floor surrounded by his brass section and by listeners who are dancing boogie woogie, a form of American swing dancing. For example, as he performs "Vorrei sapere perché" ("I want to know why," also performed by Mina in *Urlatori alla sbarra*) Celentano is first seen in a medium close-up in which dancers can be seen behind him, a zoom out then unveils two saxophonists in front of the singer and more dancers surrounding the band, revealing that the singer and his band have been standing in the middle of the dance floor. The crowded feeling of the locale's live performance emphasizes the placement of the singer and his bandmates in the middle of a crowd in which they have become part of the audience rather than separated from them, as would be the case in a recording studio. In the following music number, Tony sings a ballad on a small stage and allows the audience to sit on-stage beside him. This sense of community amongst youth is non-existent in Cesari's melodic music studio, a contrast that suggests that while both genres are already or will eventually be commercialized, rock'n'roll still maintains its roots in authenticity and sentiments of collectiveness.

The high energy of many of the *urlatori* music numbers is matched by the young Italians' swing dancing. For example, as Giulia's partner leads her to turn multiple times

her full-circle skirt twirls with such force that it floats up to her waist and exposes her legs, reminding audiences of the suggestive connotation of rock'n'roll music. Giulia's dancing also recalls Silvana Mangano's famous boogie woogie scene a decade prior in *Riso Amaro* (Giuseppe De Santis, 1949), a scene in which the dance was intentionally erotized and associated with the film's critique of materialistic American culture.[131] However, *I ragazzi* and other *urlatori* films emphasize dancing as a part of female independence and emancipation, a motif that is even more explicit in *Jukebox – Urli d'amore*. Boogie woogie is an improvised social dance primarily danced to upbeat and quick rhythms, and the use of this dance adds to the already energetic and spontaneous quality of the live performance. This sequence is then starkly contrasted with Appio's recording session: the next scene begins with a flashing sign stating "Silenzio: Incisione" (Silence: Recording), followed by a close-up of Appio singing one of the recording studio's new songs. As the camera begins to pan out it exposes the room's bare walls aside from one company logo, an empty performance that is emphasized by each musician's bored expressions and lack of engagement with each other.

Despite the *ragazzi*'s preference for live performance, they eventually realize that the most realistic path to financial security and fame is through jukebox records. The jukebox symbolizes the contradiction between mobility and the economic function of mass media; that is, the *ragazzi*'s conflict between their independence and their integration into a larger consumer system in which they must conform to an

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[131] Marga Cottino-Jones, *Women, Desire, and Power in Italian Cinema* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 72-73.

establishment controlled by the *matusa*. Although this contradiction is never truly harmonized, the aspiring musicians attempt to enter into the system while holding onto their core values. Giulia tricks her father into giving her funds so the singers can produce records, and the singers try to hold onto their music's sense of community even during their recording sessions contrary to Appio's emotionless and disengaged recordings. A few of the *ragazzi* join Betty in the recording room, clearly there to support her and enjoy her music as they bop their heads along to her song. The song she sings, "Dimmelo con un disco" ("Tell It To Me With a Disc"), accompanies a short montage sequence displaying multiple recording devices involved in the process, including the soundboard and jukebox. This rendering of the recording process represents another contradiction inherent to mass culture, that while, according to Walter Benjamin, commercialization and mass production cause a work of art to lose its "aura" of authenticity, music technology is also an avenue for self-expression and public listening and gathering since it is the only way in which the *urlatori* can support themselves and continue to produce music.[132]

The film concludes with reconciliation between Cesari and the *ragazzi*, but Giulia is the real negotiator between the two groups by tricking her father. This ending is in line with how young Italians had a strong influence on Italy's changing entertainment industries and popular culture. The musicians intentionally ruin Appio's television broadcast when a female singer jumps out of a fake jukebox and performs a *spogliarello*

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[132] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In *Illuminations*, ed. H. Arendt (New York, Schocken, 1969), 217–251.

(striptease) to create a public scandal, consequently sending Cesari to prison for a night. To recover from the stress of the scandal Cesari's doctor orders him to stay at a mountain retreat with no media access. After Cesari leaves the resort he is notified that his daughter has taken over the company in his absence and she has shifted the studio's focus entirely onto the *urlatori* singers. Initially angered, he soon discovers the singers are extremely successful and have increased the company's record sales, prompting him to exclaim, "aveva ragione lei!" ("she was right!"). Fulci's choice to have Giulia successfully take over her father's business is quite progressive considering the entertainment industry was, and still is, largely dominated by male producers; this trope occurs again in Vivarelli's *Io bacio … tu baci* (1961) in which Mina stars a young musician who decides to manage and save a music venue from being shut down by her father's business.

The penultimate scene depicts a celebration party for both the studio's new artist acquisitions and Giulia and Paolo's engagement. By replacing Giulia's leadership position with a marriage proposal the film casts light on another tension common for women, especially at onset of women's movements in the '60s—the desire for female sexuality, emancipation, and ambition, while also preserving the tradition of creating a family. A frozen image of Giulia, Paolo, Cesari, and a framed photo of Tony's new album accompany the jukebox's final narration as he sarcastically exclaims, "che bel quadretto di famiglia!" ("what a beautiful family photo!"). The *ragazzi* and their music, like Paolo and Giulia's marriage, have now integrated, becoming part of Cesari's family because of their financial success. The comment humorously indicates how "family" was no longer perceived exclusively in terms of the nuclear family for young viewers seeking

social bonds outside of the home in peer groups, while also domesticating the *urlatori*'s community in an attempt to make the music less threatening to adult audiences.

In the final scene of the film, the jukebox narrates that business at La Fogna is booming and the club has been renovated. The singers have claimed status in the music industry but they have also negotiated for this success: "persino Adriano indossa il suo peggiore nemico, lo smocking" ("even Adriano is wearing his worst enemy, the tuxedo"). Adriano is forced to stop wearing his blue jeans, an emblematic fashion of the *urlatori*, suggesting that in a consumer, mass media driven society the search for freedom is always accompanied with some degree of conformity. *I ragazzi's* dual-focus structure parallels two groups of differing values and ages to represent the new music as a culture of communal energy and spontaneity, but the *urlatori*'s integration into the recording industry is an important step for the dissemination of their music and the rise of youth agency, and in this case, Giulia's depiction of female agency in the entertainment industry, albeit being short lived. The film's final "reconciliation" ends on a bittersweet note since both groups have negotiated conditions contrary to their original values, and the generational conflict is mended primarily for economic reasons. This ending, while felicitous, nonetheless deconstructs the American musical's myth of a society in which all values will coincide harmoniously.

## ***JUKE-BOX – URLI D'AMORE* (1959)**

Released shortly after *I ragazzi,* Mauro Morassi's *Juke-box – Urli d'amore* (1959) uses the jukebox as an object that unifies various characters' relationships. The film

features Celentano, Mina, and the British rock'n'roll band Colin Hicks and the Cabin Boys, but unlike most of the *musicarelli* the musicians are limited to background performances rather than having leading roles.[133] These performances serve as establishing shots that contrast two venues in the first two-thirds of the film, the lounge-like *Tutu Nightclub* frequented by wealthy Italians and foreigners, and an unnamed underground venue where youth gather to dance and listen to rock'n'roll. The performances later in the film consist of consecutive musicals numbers during the singers' recording session, joined by Wanna Ibba and Giorgio Gaber.[134] This lengthy performance segment has no clear role in the narrative and appears as a string of musical numbers reminiscent of vaudeville shows and foreshadowing the music video form. Despite the lack of singer-protagonists, the jukebox is once again used to highlight the role of new entertainment technology among youth audiences, as well as the contradiction in which both singers and listeners search for originality or freedom by means of a device of mechanical reproduction and mass consumption. The jukebox connects the film's various vignettes, thus becoming an instrument of communication that symbolizes the unifying potential of music and mass reproduction, and the young protagonists and their use of the jukebox are contrasted with the older employees in the

[133] Colin Hicks and the Cabin Boys was a British rock'n'roll band popular in Italy after appearing in Alessandro Blasetti's 1958 music documentary, *Europa di notte*. Hicks would eventually leave the band, the remaining members renaming themselves The Rokes, the principal band with which Rita Pavone performed.

[134] Gaber wrote and performed the first Italianized rock single, "Ciao ti dirò," and toured with Celentano in 1958. There is little information on Ibba's career aside from her performance in this *musicarello*.

entertainment industry who are vilified for their profit-seeking and stale engagement with music.

Unification, communication, and as the title suggests, love, are overarching themes in the film and woven into each vignette. Mario (Carotenuto) and Marisa (Marisa Loreto) are two middle-aged executives in a one-sided romance at the recording studio Casa Musicale Juke. Rosa (Gordana Miletic) and Bruno (Aldo Giuffrè) are two young employees at the company, but are forced to hide their marriage because relationships are prohibited in the work place. Franchina (Dori Doika) and Orlando (Raffaele Pisu) work together at *Bar Medusa*, and the two eventually profess their feelings for each other in an amusing dance scene in which they close down the bar to listen to the café's jukebox together. Calogero (Tiberio Murgia) and Domenica (Mara Berni) live next to and above the café, respectively, and work for their families as a housekeeper and a suit tailor. In this vignette, the families are of different origins and prohibit their relationship, so the two are restricted to communicating secretly through the café's jukebox, playing "Anima Mia" anytime they wish to see each other. Lastly, the couple central to my analysis is Othello (Mario Girotti/Terence Hill) and his girlfriend Elsa (Karin Baal), a couple that argues over Elsa's choice of work and leisure activities. All of the stories are set around the jukebox, and Domenica and Calogero's relationship is especially significant for its use of the jukebox as a mode of overcoming generational differences (their parents are less accepting of diversity than their children). However, Othello and Elsa's vignette offer more scenes of youth gathering and self-expression because of its prevalence of dance and performance scenes, as well as uniquely offering a female perspective.

Elsa is likely an Italian character, but Baal was a German actress active in the German film and TV industry and her casting is an indication of how the postwar entertainment industry was increasingly participating in cross-cultural exchange and co-productions. Seeming in her late teens or early 20s, Elsa lives alone above a *bar* (an Italian café) and supports her leisure activities with the least amount of effort possible, including mooching off her mechanic boyfriend Othello. Her main source of income is tricking well-off married and single men by conning them into buying women's lingerie; Elsa visits the men at their home while they are alone and she models the lingerie, insinuating that she will go to bed with them. As part of her cons Elsa has ordered Othello, to his dismay, to conveniently interrupt the "sales" after exactly eight minutes, at which point the men are forced to complete their purchase. After a few cons she begins using Othello's knowledge about Casa Musicale Juke to trick the company's wealthy male executives. In one scene Elsa knocks on the door of a major executive's home while he is reading Gabriele D'Annunzio's *Il piacere* in an expensive dress robe and in an ornately decorated home. Of all the men Elsa cons, the executive is the most forceful and shameless; he pins her against a wall and tries to undress her, prompting her to yell for help. Unlike her previous cons, this interaction exaggerates the executive's wealth and flagrance to imply that those working for the recording house are materialistic and morally ambiguous.

Othello's character is a unique figure in the *urlatori* films because he is the only youth character that adheres to traditional values typically represented by the *matusa*, but the film implies that he eventually becomes more accepting of modern lifestyles because

of his experience with rock'n'roll and with Elsa. Othello is initially appalled with his girlfriend's lifestyle and cons, but she protests that she would rather use her looks for easy money than be overworked at a salon for meager tips. The couple's conflicting values are again emphasized with Elsa's boogie woogie dancing and enjoyment of rock'n'roll. Using a dual-focus narrative, a dance scene is paralleled with the middle-aged characters at *Tutu Nightclub*. After a particularly successful con, Elsa takes Othello to the locale she frequents, and the shot begins by focusing on Colin Hicks and his band singing an English rock'n'roll song and following a simple choreographed dance. When the camera cuts to expose the entire venue including the dance floor, what had at first appeared to be a music video or television performance is instead revealed to be live performance. As Elsa dances with an unnamed partner the camera alternates cuts between the couple, the band, and Othello leaning in a corner in disgust. During the song break three of the four band members are featured: the drummer smiling and looking at the guitarist (drummers often look at those who are improvising in order to match their timing), while the pianist jumps on top of the upright piano and continues playing while lying on top of the instrument. Song breaks are generally designated for improvisation, especially in live performances, and they are rooted in African-American genres (Jazz and Blues) in which communication was a key component of the music.[135] The highly

[135] Umberto Eco comments on the similarity between 1960s youth music (he mentions specifically Celentano and Pavone) and Jazz. He explains that both genres were generated out of the "spirit" of the period, and that they are "a cultural project, the choice of music connected to a folk tradition and to the rhythm of contemporary living" and with international magnitude. "Ma l'assunzione del jazz comportava, oltre ad una adesione istintiva allo spirito del tempo, un progetto culturale elementare, la scelta di una musica legata a tradizioni popolari e al ritmo della vita contemporanea, la scelta di una dimensione

energetic and (diegetically) improvised scene is exemplary of the new mode of performing associated with Americanized music genres. The band's music break is shortly joined by a jam circle, a similarly improvised act in social and solo dancing when dancers circle around and watch a couple or individual showcasing their best moves (the term jam actually originating from musical terminology).

Elsa and her partner perform aerials pleasing the crowd, but Othello remains perturbed at his girlfriend's lax behavior. The young man annoyingly asks his girlfriend why everyone in the bar is so intimate with each other because they are using the informal "tu," implying that he thinks this style of dancing is similarly overly intimate. She explains, "Ci vengo da quando avevo 14 anni, mi sento come a casa mia" ("I've been coming here since I was 14, I feel like I'm at home"). The band finally slows down to play a ballad, so she takes Othello on the dance floor and tells him they can dance "all'antica" (literally meaning in an antique style) because he "doesn't know all those [new] moves."[136] During their dance the two disagree about her lifestyle (a dialogue described earlier), emphasizing that her choice of dance and work relies on an unconventional use of the body. Elsa's decision to use her body as a form of work prompts her to later take a position as an album model for Casa Juke, which she attains by threatening to expose the executive's shameful behavior. Like the contradiction of Giulia's temporary position of power, Elsa displays female emancipation and sexual

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internazionale…" in *Apocalittici E Integrati: Comunicazioni Di Massa E Teorie Della Cultura Di Massa* (Milano: Bompiani, 1965), 290.

[136] "Io tutti quei movimenti non li so fare."

liberation by fighting against the patriarchal structure of labor, but her narrative later reinstates the star system of the 1940s and 50s in which female stars were chosen for their physical beauty. Elsa's ability to support herself and participate in the new music culture requires her to "sell out" or negotiate by working for a recording company that does not align with her own lifestyle and music preference.

The dance and live performance sequences detailed above are paralleled and contrasted with a tasteless burlesque show at the stuffy *Tutu Nightclub*. Rita-Rita (Jacqueline Derval) awkwardly and amateurishly dances in a flapper costume to a gramophone, her body movements seeming unnatural and forced. Two male dancers dressed in skimpy sailor outfits join the dancer and pretend to choose a song on the jukebox to imitate the *urlatori*. However, Rita-Rita's lack of any body awareness, and the male dancers who are apparently only classically trained, all clash in a hilariously failed impersonation of the youngsters. Meanwhile, the audience is filled with an elegantly dressed clientele slightly amused but stiffly watching the show. Compared to the youth's lively performance the middle-class elite not only seem to be easily duped, thinking the *urlatori* impersonators are authentic, they are also detached from the entertainment and their general surroundings.

By contrasting the *urlatori* performances and Elsa's storyline with the burlesque show and its middle-aged audience, the film also encourages discussions about the notion of freedom, work, leisure, and their connection to the body, a progressive notion that was closely tied to the new styles of dance of the period. Richard Dyer explains that dance scenes in musical films visually represent agency by "claiming space and time";

> … a way of relating to the world that takes claim of personal community expression as an absolute right, a feeling to which a person has an unquestionable, costless right, and which takes no heed of which persons are allowed to expand and which not, nor whose space and time can be readily encroached upon.[137]

The rock'n'roll and beat dances of the late '50s through the '60s are an apt example of Dyer's commentary on dance sequences. Scholars such as Giachetti, Bisoni, Marwick, and Piredda explain that the new dances of the period arriving from overseas—the twist, the madison, and the surf—were not couple dances, so they replaced any erotic undertones of dancing with a liberating, communicative, and socializing function.[138] Even though boogie woogie is a type of couple dancing, Elsa's comment that the locale where she dances feels like her home de-eroticizes the partnered dance. Taken in context with the rest of her lifestyle, her dancing segments more likely sought to introduce the notion that dancing need not be stripped of its communal, emotional, and sensorial nature. Once again recalling Silvana Mangano's eroticized boogie woogie sequence, Baal's performance can be viewed as a revised perspective on American culture accompanying the economic boom. Her dance sequence are also a reminder that

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[137] Richard Dyer, *In the Space of a Song: The Uses of Song in Film* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2012), 31.

[138] Diego Giachetti, "Giovani in movimento nell'italia della contestazione e delle canzonette," 29-50. In *Il '68 Diffuso: Contestazione E Linguaggi in Movimento*, ed. Silvia Casilio, and Loredana Guerrieri (Bologna: CLUEB, 2009), 41., Claudio Bisoni, "'Il problema più importante per noi/è di avere una ragazza Di Sera'. Percorsi della sessualità e identità di gender nel cinema musicale italiano degli anni Sessanta," *Cinergie,* 5 (2014): 70-82., Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties, Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c.1958 - c. 1974* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), Piredda, "Alza il volume!".

*musicarelli* may have sought to tame the music culture on-screen in order to gain a larger audience and undergo less censorship, much like the American rock'n'roll musicals.[139]

*Urli d'amore* does not conclude with an evident generational mediation, as is more common in other *musicarelli*, but the film nevertheless utilizes a dual-focus narrative to parallel two groups (middle-aged characters and executives) with differing values. In Elsa's story this device casts light on the contradictions between integration vs. individualism and tradition vs. progress, and rather than reconciling these conflicts her narrative reflects the struggles of youth pursuing unconventional or modern lifestyles. Buzzi notes that one critic dismissed the film just after its release, arguing that the narratives are shallow when compared to other jukebox films, and that its comedy simply revolves around the sexuality and double meanings of its female characters.[140] However, the critic's observation about female characters is still significant since it recalls how rock'n'roll and beat music cultures may have encouraged female agency and sexual emancipation during its production period. Despite the film's tension between new (modern) and older (traditional) lifestyles, its normalization of dancing suggests one form of female independence in which a woman can find different forms of freedom in her choice of bodily expression.

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[139] See Barry K. Grant's discussion of the U.S. rock'n'roll films, which I also reference in the previous chapter. "The Classic Hollywood Musical and the 'Problem' of Rock'n'Roll," *Journal of Popular Film and Television,* 13, no 4. (Winter, 1986), 195-205

[140] Buzzi, *La canzone pop*, 77.

## *URLATORI ALLA SBARRA* (1960)

*Urlatori alla sbarra*, written by Vivarelli and Fulci and directed by the latter, not only narrates the opposing values of older and younger generations, it is unquestionably the most politically charged of the *musicarelli* because it resembles a cultural manifesto (with some political undertones) for its youth audience. Its dual-focus narrative and generational conflicts emphasize how youth can gain agency in environments dominated by adults through consumer goods that offer mobility—scooters in particular. The film is also distinct from other *musicarelli* because of how it openly questions who controls mass media, and because its youth protagonists negotiate less with the older generation. The young musicians must defend their reputation in a society putting their culture on trial (*alla sbarra* meaning "to pass judgment on"), but the film concludes by illustrating how the americanized music and youth have cultural power in the entertainment system.

The film opens with a close-up of an open mouth accompanied by the sound of a scream as an omniscient narrator begins to recount the history of the *urlo* (yell/scream). He explains that the yell is one of the most powerful sounds of humankind, originating from caveman, to soldiers of the Roman Empire, Byzantine Knights, and soccer fans all of who yell in distress, pain, or anger. Returning to present time, the narration of the yell cuts to a business meeting, in a room with an inscribed plaque stating "congresso nazionale per la rieducazione della gioventù" (National Congress for the Reeducation of Youth) in which a group of middle-aged gentlemen yell, ironically, for the taming of the *urlatori* youth. This segment's documentary-style sets the stage for the rest of the film by suggesting that the film represents real conflicts of the period. The credits commence

alongside Celentano's song "Il tuo bacio è come un rock," and it concludes with the statement that the film was "irresponsibly directed" by Lucio Fulci, a sarcastic remark on the way in which media portrayed the *urlatori.*

A large group of businessmen at a blue jeans corporation gather in a meeting to lament about young consumers they believe have transformed what was once their product of comfort into a symbol of "teppismo e peccato" ("hooliganism and sin"). The head executive proposes a solution, stating that they will pay the *urlatori* to generate positive publicity by performing public acts of goodwill. The middle-aged man picks up the phone and the screen cuts to Mina singing in a run-down house packed with struggling Italian artists (played by Celentano, Joe Sentieri, Gianni Meccia, Brunetta, and Umberto Bindi) and "Chet l'americano" (American jazz trumpeter, Chet Baker). Mina, as herself, answers the phone and proclaims, "Qualcuno vuole dimostrare che chi porta i blu jeans non è un teddy-boy!" ("Someone wants to prove that those who wear blue jeans aren't teddy-boys!"). "Teddy-boy" was a pejorative term for delinquent adolescents that listened to rock'n'roll often used in the media, as noted earlier in my findings in *La sera* and in Pasolini's screenplay. Recognizing their current reputation, the singers accept the executive's request in hopes of earning money to organize a show through which they can promote and legitimize their music. Mina gathers the group around a large map of Rome explaining that every musician should pick a zone to work in with the center of the map as their meeting place. By huddling around a physical map to form a plan, each singer choosing a specific area of the city to work in, Mina has encouraged the musicians to take control of specific spaces of the city where they can promote their cause.

The group agrees that in order to fix their reputation they must change the way the media discusses them by completeing public acts of service. Unfortunately, their efforts are fruitless and every attempt humorously backfires. One of the young male singers offers to carry an elderly woman's groceries across the street, but she beats him thinking he is a mugger. Two other members push a man who approaches a woman walking on the sidewalk; she then slaps the two singers exclaiming that she can take care of herself. One of the female singers helps an elderly man cross the street, but she eventually slaps him after he tries to kiss her. Finally, the entire group works together to help an elderly man up the stairs of his apartment complex, but since this success occurs indoors they unfortunately get no media coverage. Newspaper clippings are interspersed throughout the film, continuing to describe the public outcry over the *urlatori* singers despite their best efforts to improve their reputation.

The elder that the singers helped, Senator Bucci, is coincidentally also the grandfather of Giulia (Elke Sommer), whose father Professor Giommarelli (Carotenuto) works for RAI. As the head executive, Giommarelli organizes and acquires talent for television variety show and keeps track of the *urlatori* in the newspapers. He later publically denounces the singers and bans them from the network; here the film hints at how RAI was censored by the Christian Democracy in the postwar period. The executive is appalled by the group's lifestyle and fashion choices and tells his daughter she should be embarrassed for spending time with Joe and his friends. Like the older generations represented in the other *urlatori* films, Giommarelli chooses only melodic singers for his programming who are unenthusiastic and superficial compared to the *urlatori*'s live

performances. For example, in a musical sequence in which RAI is recording a musical number, a melodic singer and his female backup dancers are stiff with oddly mannequin-like movements, and the song is appropriately titled Temperanza Virtù (Tempered or moderated virtue)—a recording studio sequence that contrasts the energetic and communal nature of the young singers' live performances.

After the group's goodwill toward Senator Bucci, the elder invites them into his home and introduces him to Giulia and her large group of friends, all of whom are the daughters of important state officials and RAI employees. The two groups spend time together and the girls are soon captivated by the *urlatori*, each girl coupling up with a male singer. Mina and Brunetta decide to spend time with the group of girls, and while many of the *urlatori*'s musical numbers are spontaneous and in public spaces, the girls' performance in Senator Bucci's house is a unique portrayal of how young women could discover freedom in everyday spaces. As Brunetta plays piano and Mina sings "Vorrei sapere perché," the rest of the girls are dispersed around the room bouncing their heads and moving their arms to the music while still engaged in their own leisure activities. One girl is admiring and kissing a photo of an *urlatore*, another is reading *Dracula*, and one curiously inspects and tries to play the trumpet. None of them live in this home, but they have turned it into a space of gathering in which they can pursue their interests both as individuals and as a group bonded through music. The scene's focus on everyday activities while listening to Mina recognizes the communal nature of the popular music, and it foreshadows how many of the female youth singers that emerged in the following (Pavone, Caselli, Pravo) would offer more liberal representations of female audiences.

In addition to the jukebox, another product associated with the new youth culture is the scooter, a product that permitted more opportunities for mobility and leisure. After the group of girls have spent time together the male singers stop by to pick them up, the young men sit on scooters outside of Senator Bucci's house and whistle to inform them of their arrival. The girls frantically strip their dresses and change into jeans and sweaters, then run down the stairs to each hop on a scooter. As Joe performs "Moto Rock," singing, "mi piace accelerar, mi piace il centro urban. … e senza frenarmi con te" ("I like to accelerate, I like the urban city. … and without holding myself back with you"), the group swarms through busy streets in Rome.[141] Adam Arvidsson's study on the Vespa and Italian youth countercultures explains that scooters were a symbol of modernity because they enabled the mobility to access dance halls and social gatherings.[142] However, based on a study in 1960 of a small Italian Milanese suburb the vehicle also created a generational gap in which the Vespa encouraged isolation and "the disintegration of a pre-industrial social fabric." Like the jukebox, the scooter's representation of a larger youth consumer culture and generational separation sheds light on tensions about integration and individualism. While *musicarelli* such as *Urlatori alla sbarra* and *Io baci …tu baci* portray scooters as harmless and simply as objects of modernity (speed and mobility) that allow youth to socialize outside of the home, they also offered youth a way to isolate themselves from the rest of society. Perhaps the films

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[141] A similar scene occurs in *Io bacio...tu baci*.

[142] Adam Arvisson, "From Counterculture to Consumer Culture: Vespa and the Italian Youth market, 1958-78." *Journal of Consumer Culture*. 1.1 (2001): 50.

were simply seeking to dispel the scooter's isolationist connotations for economic reasons, but when considering Fulci's activism for modernization it may have been a way to further promote goods associated with modern lifestyles.

The film's final segments are its most subversive, its referencing of the corruption of RAI's network that initially led to a heavy censorship of the film during its first release. After Giommarelli bans the *urlatori* from RAI, Senator Bucci is infuriated and throws his television off its stand, yelling that he is bored by the channel's censored programming. He gathers the *urlatori*, Giulia, and her girlfriends and delivers an empowering speech; "Ha ragione chi urla di più! Urlano i vostri padri e allora urlate le vostre canzoni! Urlate per farvi sentire da tutta l'Italia!" ("He who yells the most is in the right. Your fathers yell and now you must yell your songs! Yell to make yourselves heard by all of Italy!"). Inspiring the singers to use their *urlo*, after which they were named, Senator Bucci convinces them to promote their music by travelling through Italy and performing in the *piazza*, a public space historically associated with the *popolo* (the common people). A montage of songs ensues in which each singer is shown on stage surrounded by crowds supporting them with picket signs and dancing. The performances are superimposed with newspaper clippings and images of monuments in Milan, Florence, Turin, Bologna, and Pisa. The media finally accepts the rising popularity of the *urlatori* and the papers proclaim that "La gioventù ha i suoi diritti!" ("Youth as their rights!") and "Il pubblico gremisce le piazze!" ("The public has crowded the squares!"). The multi-layered superimpositions with city spaces and the political undertones of the newspaper headlines illustrate that the singers have not only won over Italy's urban cities,

but that they have also proven their generation worthy of respect. The *urlatori*'s public rise to stardom consequently convinces the RAI executives to collaborate with the singers to produce shows that are more appealing to modern audiences.

Even though the musicians help a commercial company sell their product by indirectly promoting blue jeans, a good linked primarily with youth fashion of the period, the singers are also supporting and advancing youth's cultural and consumer power. The blue jeans company and RAI ultimately exploit the youth's popularity and success for their own gain, while the singers' likewise use the entertainment and consumer industries to support their lifestyles and advance their careers. There are clear political and social implications in Fulci and Vivarelli's story. In fact, the initial script was censored for this reason; Buzzi includes a transcript from the Ministry's censorship hearing that reveals that most of the censoring was of explicit references to the Christian Democracy party that controlled RAI and the film's references of specific politicians.[143] The film was a commentary on RAI and a critique on conservatives controlling the media, and because of this political undertone it is not surprising that this film is the most explicit of the early *musicarelli* in resisting myths of harmonization and generational conflicts. *Urlatori alla sbarra* depicts a society in which youth instead take control of mass media and entertainment, but one in which they are must still work with companies dominated by conservatives and their parents' generation.

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[143] This is not the only *musicarello* to undergo censorship, but it was the only one with heavy censoring and that demanded a revised screenplay. Buzzi also states this was the only *musicarello* to require "invervention from the Ministry" according to Buzzi. In *La canzone pop*, 103.

## CONCLUSION

I have shown how the early *musicarelli* highlight the differences of each age group's engagement with music, specifically regarding each group's perception of entertainment and consumer goods as avenues for economic gain, social agency, or self-expression. The contradictory reconciliations between adults and youth about differences in lifestyles and values make manifest the paradoxical relationship between societal or group integration and individualism. I have thus illustrated how these *musicarelli* utilize formal devices typical of the Hollywood musical in a way that disrupts the American musical's rendering of an ideal harmonization of different social and age groups. Rather than finding a common ground based on cultural preference or personal values, the only sense of unification in these narratives rests on each group's self-serving desire for success. By adapting and altering the Hollywood musical's dual-focus narrative and its focus on dichotomies, the Italian films also offer a deeper understanding of how Americanization and cultural exchange were a part of the *musicarello*'s depiction of, and participation in modernization and the postwar consumer culture. While the American musical films generated myths of harmonization that appealed to all audiences, my analyses have shown that the Italian films' contradictory perspectives on reconciliation reveal how societies founded on total societal and generational harmonization is unrealistic, demythologizing the myth that U.S. musicals sought to promote.

The setting of locales and music venues reminds us that new entertainment, technology, and public communal spaces that were appropriated by young Italians may have been extremely valuable for an age group with less agency or sense of belonging in

other public spheres, especially for a group that was subject to prejudice and the berating of media outlets. The *urlatori* films focus on the new music's sense of community and how it offered spaces for youth gathering (nightclubs) and channels for youth influence (mass media and consumerism), but a paradoxical relationship remains in which youth seeking freedom also conform to the same consumer culture in which they have found agency. Despite this complicated relationship, it is important to remember that even though the films essentially commercialized youth culture for a larger audience, they still, for the first time in Italian film history, offered young Italians narrative representation by focusing on youth friendship, love, and female empowerment.

# Chapter Three: Comedic Devices in the *Musicarello*: Identity Performance and the Reexamination of Male Crisis in the Postwar Period

Just after its release, an anonymous film critic of *Stampa sera* described Lucio Fulci's *musicarello*, *Uno strano tipo* (1963), as "a silly farce not immune to vulgarity," and characterizing Adriano Celentano's comedic lead role as a performance in which "fans of the rock'n'roll singer will get a taste of many [musical] numbers in his repertoire, and with a very good will they will also appreciate the monkey-like caricature that Celentano makes of himself in the clear imitation of a Jerry Lewis show."[144] Perhaps unknowingly, the anonymous critic identified the qualities of the *musicarello* cycle that not only distinguished it from other popular genres of the period—its function as a star vehicle promoting a singer's repertoire, but also its emphasis on cross-cultural exchange and use of parody. As part of this parody, there are a handful of *musicarelli* that incorporate imitation, doubling, and farce for comedic effect. I have discussed how these narrative devices or tropes participate in the cycle's camp aesthetics in Chapter One, and how they encourage discourses about youth and gender as performative identities. In this chapter I offer case studies of how such devices are utilized in some comedic *musicarelli*, and how, by constructing representations of youth masculinity that are fluid, fluctuating, vulnerable, or uncertain, the films offer narratives in which youth experience of consumerism and mass culture sheds light on larger notions of the self as performative

[144] "Farsa essa stessa scemerottola e non immune di volgarità", "Ma i «fans» dell'urlatore vi potranno delibare parecchi numeri del suo repertorio, e con molta buona volontà apprezzare anche la scimmiesca caricatura che Celentano fa di se stesso sulla palese falsariga di un Jerry Lewis di avanspettacolo." *Stampa sera*. Anno 95, Numero 81 (1963).

and always in process. More specifically, in this chapter I analyze selected *musicarelli* with leading or supporting male protagonists that destabilize traditional notions of gender roles, behavior, and body image through comedic devices, and how these characters offers non-normative or unstable depictions of masculinity and male crisis, such as uncertainty, vulnerability, or ineptness.

The *musicarelli* included in this chapter are those I believe to be most representative of how the cycle's recurring comedic tropes dismantle normative gender constructs and perceptions of stardom (and in this case, specifically male stardom) as a means of also reexamining current notions of and discussions of male failure. The *musicarello* depicts a youth generation during a historical time that young Italians sought to distance themselves from their forefathers and traditional values, a desire I detailed in Chapter One. Because the time between adolescence and adulthood is a moment of development and self-identification, narratives about youth are particularly useful for discussing larger notions of transition or of performative identity. The selected *musicarelli* are those in which main or secondary narratives comically depict a loss of authority, or of ineptness, vulnerability, and tropes of performance and impersonation. Although Ettore M. Fizzarotti's films are fairly conservative and gender normative, his supporting plots frequently use stock characters played by actors that were already famous in Italian film comedies. I show how these secondary stories, using in *In ginocchio da te* (1964) and *Il suo nome è Donna Rosa* (1969) as case studies, are often comedic because of their focus on flipped gender roles and the man's weakness around women.

I then examine Fulci's *Uno strano tipo* and Mario Amendola's *Cuore matto…matto da legare* (starring Little Tony, 1967) to discuss s how tropes of hybrid identity (the double/*doppelganger* and imitation) and the inept male figure represent a fragmented and fluctuating masculine identity. I argue that these films offer male protagonists that do not necessarily represent uncertainty, vulnerability, or ineptness as male failure, but as a reevaluation of how masculinity in crisis is a natural part of the self in process. Within this framework my investigation of specific comedic tropes and devices in youth-oriented narratives adds to current discourse on cinematic depictions of male failure and masculinity in crisis during periods of modernization, in turn offering a alternative perspective in which non-normative representations of masculinity are indicative of progress and change in a modern, and even performative society.

## CINEMATIC DEPICTIONS OF MALE FAILURE: REEXAMINING MASCULINITY IN CRISIS

In addition to the new generation's shifting conceptions of work, leisure time, and entertainment in the postwar period, the *musicarello* dramatizes how gender roles and conceptions of masculinity and femininity were changing alongside the nation's industrialization and changes in societal values. Sandro Bellassai's extensive discussion on masculinity indicates that while "masculinity in crisis" has been a recurring theme throughout Italian history, that the postwar period, and especially the 1950s and 1960s, was perhaps the moment in which it was most necessary and inevitable to redefine notions of masculinity because of cultural changes and reactions to consumerism and

rapid economic development.[145] He explains that new modes of communication and consumption encouraged new perspectives of gender roles because there was a redistribution of men's and women's social power; for example, women were obtaining more influence in public spheres, a shift that had already begun at the turn of the century. The scholar asserts that the greatest cause of these social shifts was the emergence and influence of mass media, and as I detailed in Chapter 2 the *musicarello* is exemplary of the way in which Italians, and young Italians especially, turned to mass media and consumerism for new forms of public representation. Films and magazines were particularly influential because they narrated the changing gender roles in both private (domestic) and public (work and education) spheres when "traditional (societal) models were becoming more discredited and abandoned."[146] According to Bellassai, the dissemination of images and narratives about changing gender and social models, such as women's increased desire for social and political equality, worked alongside the accelerated industrialization of the economic boom to induce male anxiety—more specifically, anxieties over the loss of virility and authoritative power that were characteristic of traditional definitions of masculinity during the first half of the 1900s and further advocated in fascist ideology.[147]

Given Bellassai's description of cinema as a tool for producing and disseminating images of modernization, everyday life, and gender models, it is not surprising that most

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[145] Sandro Bellassai, *La mascolinità contemporanea* (Rome: Carocci, 2011), 99.

[146] "i modelli tradizionale venivano sempre più' screditati e abbandonati." Ibid., 99, 104.

[147] Ibid., 100, 123.

scholarship on Italian masculinity in crisis has also examined its representation in film. Andrea Bini, Jacqueline Reich, Ruth Ben-Ghiat, Marcia Landy, and Sergio Rigoletto have all analyzed the way in which cinematic representations offer insight into contemporary and twentieth-century male crisis.[148] Catherine O'Rawe discusses the implications of this growing scholarship, explaining that "work on the crisis discourse and its prevalence suggests, in fact, that crisis can be read as a constitutive of masculinity itself."[149] Rather than continuing this discourse about male crisis as an indication of and product of social distress, she insists we reconsider how we think about the notion of masculinity in crisis. Her recent publication, *Stars and Masculinities in Contemporary Italian Cinema* (2014), reexamines the "crisis trope as ultimately generative, laying foundations for new meanings and iterations of masculinity" in comedic, melodramatic, and historical films of the early 2000s. Her analyses examines that contemporary narratives often depict male characters as experiencing failure because of their inability to cope with changes in "the gender order"—a shift in power relations that Bellassai correlates with increased female presence in traditionally male-dominated public

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[148] Andrea Bini, *Male Anxiety and Psychopathology in Film: Comedy Italian Style* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). Jacqueline Reich, *Beyond the Latin Lover: Marcello Mastroianni, Masculinity, and Italian Cinema* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004). Ruth Ben-Ghiat, "Unmaking the Fascist Man: Film, Masculinity, and the Transition from Dictatorship," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 10.3 (Fall 2005): 336-365. Marcia Landy, *Stardom, Italian Style: Screen Performance and Personality in Italian Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 2008). Sergio Rigoletto, *Masculinity and Italian Cinema: Sexual Politics, Social Conflict and Male Crisis in the 1970s* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014).

[149] Catherine O'Rawe, *Stars and Masculinities in Contemporary Italian Cinema* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 5.

spheres.[150] O'Rawe's claim that male crisis is as space for new masculine identities focalizes what Bellassai only briefly touches upon, that "the multiplication of identity types is a phenomenon typical of profound historical phases and cultural transformations." [151] By investigating how male figures in the *musicarello* promote alternative forms of masculinity during a moment of transition (the rapidly changing economic and social climates of the late 1950s-1960s), I hope to add to current understandings of representations of changing masculinity in popular postwar media.

Narratives of masculinity in crisis are certainly not exclusive to the postwar period, but it was a time of more progressive and widespread imagery because of emerging mass media and communication. The *musicarello* was a product and representation of postwar consumerism, especially because of its intermediality and emphasis on youth goods, so the films provide an excellent resource for reexamining the way in which we should discuss postwar cinematic representations of masculinity in crisis—or in other terms, shifts away from traditional forms of masculinity. According to Rigoletto, such depictions of male failure or crisis usually detail vulnerable and passive men, and the ridicule of "male prowess and sexual vigor, previously celebrated by propaganda films of the fascist period and so central to the representation of masculinity in Hollywood cinema."[152] And as exemplified by both Bellassai and O'Rawe, scholars

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[150] Ibid., 8

[151] "la moltiplicazione delle opzioni identitarie é un fenomeno tipico delle fasi storiche e trasformazione culturale profonda … ma nel contesto degli anni sessanta tale fenomeno sembrava straordinariamente difeso e radicale." Bellassai, *La mascolinità contemporanea*, 110.

[152] Rigoletto, *Masculinity and Italian Cinema,* 4.

tend to characterize depictions of failed masculinity as reactions to changes in gender order, or in other words, the power dynamic between men and women. However, rather than perceiving such characteristics of uncertain masculinity as failure, I am in agreement with O'Rawe's perspective that representations of masculinity in crisis can be generative by opening up spaces for new images of male behavior and roles.

As I will highlight in the following analyses, images of incompetent, vulnerable, or feminized men in the *musicarelli* do not necessarily cast a critical light on male failure, gender reversals, or shifts in gendered order. Their depictions of masculinity instead present these changes as natural for maturation and personal progress, thereby destabilizing traditional gender roles and generating space for queer identification by exposing the way in which identity is largely performative, experimental, and unstable.

### THE MALE *INETTO* IN POSTWAR CINEMA

My examinations illustrate that much of the comedic and camp undertones of the cycle are materialized through narratives devices and tropes that present youth and gender subjectivity as unstable or fluid. Specifically, I examine how depictions of shifts in gender power and hierarchy, male ineptitude, masquerade/impersonation, and doubling are characteristics of the *inetto* (an inept or incompetent male figure). The *inetto* frequently appears in postwar Italian comedies like the *commedia all'italiana* in plots centered around "l'arte di arrangiarsi" ("the art of getting by") in the changing economic

and social climate.[153] Despite an overlap of production time and supporting actors, the *musicarello* and its use of the *inetto* are unique from other 1960s comedies because the cycle sought to represent a specifically youth experience and self-discovery.

Before analyzing the way in which the films present inept male characters, it is necessary to review how *inetto* has been discussed in cinematic narratives and social and gender discourse. According to Jacqueline Reich, the *inetto* was a figure in postwar cinema in which men were "at odds with and out of place in a rapidly changing political, social, and sexual environment" depicted by incompetence, feminization, or mask of hyper-sexuality.[154] Her critical contribution to masculinity and Italian film stardom, *Beyond the Latin Lover: Marcello Mastroianni, Masculinity, and Italian Cinema* (2004), examines how postwar stardom deconstructs gender stereotypes through the cinematic depictions of the *inetto.* She maintains that constructions of masculinity are constantly changing because they are produced by particular historical and social climates, and that "many social and political changes in the second half of the twentieth century have produced unsteady and conflicting masculine roles, which found the expression of the *inetto*."[155] Using Marcello Mastroianni as a case study, Reich analyzes how the star's inept or incompetent film characters ultimately deconstruct and parody the "Latin Lover," a stereotype of masculinity that was created for international and Italian consumers. In

[153] For a more detailed discussion of this trope see Rémi Fournier-Lanzoni's *Comedy Italian Style: The Golden Age of Italian Film Comedies* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2008), 70.

[154] Jacqueline Reich, *Beyond the Latin Lover*, xii.

[155] Ibid., xiii.

this examination the *inetto* embodies masculinity in crisis, but I would like to extend this discussion by investigating how the *musicarello* not only destabilizes traditional notions of masculinity through male ineptness, but how it ultimately encourages alternative or non-gender normative forms of masculinity.

The films in this chapter use the *inetto* for comedic ends that, alongside camp undertones and tropes of hybrid identity and performance, produce parodies and question gender constructs and essentialism. By exposing the performative and fluid nature of masculinity the *musicarello* does not convey non-normative masculinity as a form of anxiety for a lost masculinity or virility, but as an indication of an increasingly performative culture. Given that the audience of these films was primarily young Italians seeking models with which they could identify, it is significant that the characters are not critiqued for their non-normative gender behaviors or social roles.

In addition to the films in which the *inetto* occurs alongside gender role reversals and shifts in power, I will demonstrate how certain *musicarelli* seem to question masculinity and male failure through tropes of performance or hybrid identity—by which I mean the use of impersonation or doubling to represent unstable or fragmented identities. The *inetto*, doubling, and impersonation function together in these films as a comically extreme or exaggerated version of the self and of desire that encourages viewers to reflect upon notions of identity and subjectivity. The literary or cinematic device of the double often represents a split or fragmented identity in periods of modernization. Valentina Polcini notes the trope's transformation within twentieth-century Italian fiction, explaining that over time the device shifted from detailing the

private sphere (psychological) to the public sphere (physical identity). In other words, instead of embodying "the relationship of the individual with his/her own self, the double configures a way of understanding how the individuals see themselves and are seen by others within a composite social framework."[156] This reading can be extended to the acts of masquerade/impersonation and parody, especially in the musical films that emphasize the act of performance and theatricality. While Polcini believes that this device is no longer used for detailing the private sphere, her discussion touches upon the fact that performative behavior is tied to the way in which one also views him or herself. The presence of these tropes in the *musicarello* not only generate discourse on identity and self-articulation, they are also a component of the cycle's camp aesthetics by emphasizing the performative nature of gender and self-presentation for youth.

Beginning with examples that rely largely on parental or secondary male characters for comedic effect, I will first review how the cycle's use of the *inetto* is a figure that reflects shifts in gender relations and gender dynamics. Following this section, I then analyze two films most representative of the performative tropes I detailed above, Lucio Fulci's *Uno strano tipo* (1962) and Mario Amendola's *Cuore matto…matto da legare* (1967). I argue that these two films challenge the notion of male failure as imagined through the figure of the *inetto* through displays of incompetence, vulnerability, or feminization.

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[156] Valentina Polcini, *Dino Buzzati and Anglo-American Culture: The Re-Use of Visual and Narrative Texts in His Fantastic Fiction* (UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 95.

## Shifting Gender Dynamics in Subplots with Supporting Characters

Male characters in the cycle often reflect shifts in power and changes in male-female dynamics through plots in which men are passive toward or around female characters (usually a mother, wife, or romantic interest). This recurring narrative device is particularly noteworthy because it is not limited to main protagonists and also present in side stories and supporting adult characters. The majority of these characters were cast by specific actors already famous for their roles in other comedic genres, such as Nino Taranto, the comedic pair Franco and Ciccio, Totò, Dolorus Palumbo, and Bice Valori. Ettore M. Fizzarotti, who directed many of the films with prescriptive narratives, stated that his choice to cast famous supporting actors was to guarantee the films' success.[157] These comedic secondary figures are usually characterized as inept because of their confusion or loss of power around women. The prevalence of authoritative (and at times even manipulative) female characters is representative of how a considerable number of *musicarelli* emphasize female independence through work and personal ambition, a shift in gender dynamics that Bellassai noted in periods of masculinity in crisis.[158]

The motivation for casting these supporting actors seems to have been to target a viewer's, and especially adult viewers, previous cinematic knowledge in order to promote more audience investment in the films. This extratextual knowledge also participates in

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[157] Sergio M. Germani, Simone Starace, Roberto Turigliatto, *TITANUS: Cronoca familiare del cinema italiano* (Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia and Edizioni Sabinae. 2014), 378.

[158] These films do not simply depict the rise of women working outside of the domestic sphere during and after the boom, they offer narratives that of female perspectives of points of view, some of which I discuss in Chapter Four.

the musicarello's self-reflexivity and underlying notions of performance by reminding viewers that they are already familiar with these actors and their comedic roles. All of these actors began their careers in theater, typically in revue/variety shows (*teatro di rivista*). This transition from stage to screen comedy influenced the theatrical quality of comedic cinema by "reproducing for the big screen the performance styles, gags, and comic personae typical of their stage shows," and they "guaranteed the success of cinema over traditional forms" of entertainment. [159] This sense of both familiarity and theatricality is further evidenced by the fact that Fizzarotti, followed by other *musicarello* directors, reused the actors listed above in thematically similar plots (almost exclusively about gender relations) to the extent that they could be considered as stock characters in the cycle. Whether intentional or not, by choosing this group of older actors that were already famous in the industry these sub-plots portray how adult generations also experienced changes in gender behavior and shifts away from traditional family dynamics.

For example, in Fizzarotti's *Il suo nome è Donna Rosa*, starring Romina Power and Al Bano, the film's father figure is vulnerable and clumsy when he meets and courts a confident and controlling woman. The recently widowed Countess Donna Rosa (Bice Valori) seeks a second husband with wealth and nobility, and after meeting with many men, none of who meet her standards, she meets with Antonio Belmonte (Nino Taranto), the owner of an antique store and Rosetta's (Power) father. Antonio is a mediocre

[159] Luisa Farinotti, "Comedy," 109-11. In *Directory of World Cinema: Italy*, ed. Louis Bayman (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 109.

businessman, and his house is furnished with the furniture he is also selling. A comical scene shows Antonio's employees (Franco and Ciccio) interrupt him and Rosetta at dinner by literally take the table out from underneath them so they can deliver it to a buyer. Later on during Rosetta's eighteenth birthday party, which she has been planning for some time, the employees clear the room of its furnishings, including the record player the teenagers are dancing to and force the party to an abrupt end. Antonio is an unskilled worker and he unintentionally interferes in his daughter's social life, but he is nonetheless financially and emotionally supportive of Rosetta. While the value of the male breadwinner is not entirely undermined, the film offers humble perceptions of this position of power. Conversely, Donna Rosa secures more control over her surroundings because she uses her nobility to her advantage. Her authority is also reflected in her frequent direct addresses to the camera (she is the only character with the power to narrate), and her treatment of men. For example, The countess orders Antonio to complete her errands, convinces him to set Rosetta up with her son, and persuades him to buy one of her pricey antiques. Antonio's inability to refuse Donna Rosa's requests emphasizes Antonio's general lack of authority of success as a traditional patriarch or authoritative figure. However, the father's flaws are portrayed comically and he is eventually coupled with Donna Rosa despite her controlling demeanor.

In *In ginocchio da te* Carla's (Laura Efrikian) parents also complicate the role of the male breadwinner through comic depictions of shifts in gender dynamics and traditional positions. On arriving at the military training base, Gianni (Morandi) and his peers have been waiting in line to receive their military outfits from Carla's father,

Marshal Antonio (Nino Taranto), only to discover that, suspiciously, none of their sizes are available. The Marshal pretends to run out of sizes and instead offers them oversized outfits and sends the young men to the neighboring alteration shop owned by his wife (Dolores Palumbo) and daughter. Both spouses share an equal hand in their family's income and they have created a long running scheme in which they both partake in the business. Although they seem to hold equal financial power in supporting their family, the two disagree on the restrictions of their daughter's social life. For instance, the mother does not wish to impose strict rules on her daughter (she allows her to stay out past curfew), but the father still uses his authoritative power in the household by disagreeing with his them. However, as many viewers of Italian comedies may recognize, Nino Taranto often plays bumbling comedic characters that are stereotyped by his Neapolitan origins, and the *In ginocchio da te* trilogy is no exception.[160] Antonio's clumsy and flustered personality that invariable throughout the entire trilogy makes it difficult to take his authoritative power seriously in comparison to his assertive and composed wife. Even if the narrative at first familiarizes viewers to Antonio as the head of his family, many of his subsequent appearances portray him as a clumsy and incompetent as a camp Marshal.

Both films turn spousal relations and traditional domestic roles into a comical spectacle, an example of how supporting plots and characters not only encouraged adult viewership of the cycle, but how it may have also offered young viewers a vision of the family as imperfect and changing conceptions of gender dynamics. I would argue that

[160] The same cast and characters are present in all three films as a running narrative: *In ginocchio da te* (*Kneeling Beside You*, 1964) *Se non avessi più te* (*If I No Longer Had You*, 1965), and *Non son degno di te* (*I'm Not Worthy of You*, 1965).

this departure from images of a traditional and patriarchal family is another facet of the cycle's construction of alternative images of masculinity. Kelly Kessler notes that American musical films of the mid-1960s began to displace romance and marriage as the main narrative devise and instead incorporated more plots that challenged gender norms.[161] In response to social-historical changes, the American genre sought to dismantle images of hegemonic masculinity through the repetition of personal and inner male conflict that lead "to a repeated presentation of men and masculinity separate from the domestic breadwinner and handsome musical husband."[162] According to Kessler, by focusing on a male character's ambition, drive, and self-actualization, the musicals highlight the performative aspects of masculinity that extended outside of domestic sphere. When considering both the economic backdrop in which the *musicarelli* materialized and their focus on young fame-seeking musicians, it is no surprise that these Italian films place more emphasis on personal ambition and conflict than on courtship, even when both are present in the narrative. The cycle's supporting plots and male adult characters reinforce the films' main narratives of young male aspiration (becoming a singer) and inner conflict (about gender roles and behaviors) by suggesting that normative family structures and dynamics, including the role of the virile male breadwinner, are not always necessary or ideal.

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[161] Kelly Kessler, *Destabilizing the Hollywood Musical: Music, Masculinity and Mayhem* (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2010), 140.

[162] Ibid.

These two films are examples of how *musicarelli* with relatively conservative main stories and young star performances still offer perspectives on the postwar changes in gender dynamics through comical subplots and theatrical supporting characters. It is worth briefly noting that while many of the *musicarelli* cast these actors, the films did not all have subplots, the device seems to be particular to Fizzarotti's films in his attempt to reach a larger audience. It is also possible that the director chose to incorporate these narratives because his main storylines (starring the young singers) are generally more sentimental or serious than other films in the cycle: In *Il suo nome è Donna Rosa*, prior to being coupled at the conclusion of the film, Andrea (Al Bano) sings mostly ballads about his longing to date Rosetta (Powers), and after the two begin dating she mistakenly believes his encounter with a tourist is of a romantic nature; In *In ginocchio da te*, Laura (Laura Efrikian) and Gianni's (Morandi) love story revolves around the two struggling to spend time together because of her father's restrictions and because of Gianni's military service. By offering marginal plots for comedic relief, it is actually only within these comedic sequences that the changing social relations of the period come to the fore. Given the disruptive power of comedy as a form of satire or parody, and recalling the queer potential of musical films (discussed in Chapter One), by periodically offering scenes of situational comedy Fizzarotti's films can be read as a breaks or cracks in the films' overarching normative and conservative representation. Such is the case for camp cinema that uses marginal moments as opportunities within which spectators can seek heteronormative or queer representation.

## CELENTANO'S SELF-PARODY AND ALTERNATIVE MASCULINITY IN *UNO STRANO TIPO* (1962)

On the opposite side of the spectrum, Celentano's films are so comedic that they are borderline parodic, and in Lucio Fulci's *Uno strano tipo* the star explicitly parodies his own character as well as his star persona. Before analyzing the film and Celentano's distinct disruption of traditional masculinity—through parody and imitation—it is helpful to review how his public persona was relatable to his audience and to what degree he may have been a particularly strong model for young Italians.

Celentano was a significant icon of the late '50s-60s youth music and was one of the first *urlatori* in the music scene. Cultural historians, namely Stephen Gundle, Massimo Locatelli, Mauro Buzzi, Felice Liperi, Stefano Della Casa, and Paolo Prato, recognize that Celentano was indeed a pioneer of the "modernized" music, a singer that emerged out of an entertainment industry closely aligned with modern technology.[163] Locatelli explains that Celentano was at the center of intermedial entertainment that contributed to "the on-going modernization of Italy," and "a part of the generation that configured Italy's first basic encounter with the pervasive modern lifestyles and media

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[163] Gundle, "Adriano Celentano and the Origins." Massimo Locatelli, "The Birth of Pop. The Soundscapes of the Early Sixties in Italian Cinema and Television," *Quaderns*, 9 (2014). Mauro Buzzi, *La canzone pop e il cinema italiano: Gli anni del boom economico (1958-1963)* (Torino: Kaplan, 2013). Felice Liperi, ""Il problema più importante' (1958-1966) Canzoni e politica da 'volare' e 'marinella'", 89-95. In *Giovani prima della rivolta*, ed. Marco Grispigni and Paola Ghione (Italy: Manifestolibri, 1998). Stefano Della Casa, *Il professor Matusa e i suoi hippies: Cinema e musica in Italian negli anni Sessanta*, ed. Stefano della Casa and Paolo Manera (Roma: Bonanno, 2011). Paolo Prato, "Virtuosity and Populism: The Everlasting Appeal of Mina and Celentano," 162-171. In *Made in Italy: Studies in Popular Music*, ed. Franco Fabbri, Goffredo Plastino (New York: Routledge, 2014).

technologies."[164] While these scholars aptly observe that the star symbolizes the new youth-centered entertainment and its impact on popular culture, they little recognize how the singer's persona may have also reflected the social and cultural concerns of *urlatori* fans, especially those choosing progressive lifestyles and behaviors distinct from their parents. Shortly after his musical career began, the star took a more active role in the industry by building his own record label in 1962—Clan Celentano—that promoted other young performers of the era (and the label is still active today). Much like the star who influenced Celentano's music and star image (Elvis Presley), the Italian star became a symbol of the young working-class hero as an entrepreneur with humble origins and who addressed youth values of social equality, political agency, and entering the workforce.

Paolo Prato claims that unlike Mina, who was known for her sophistication of style and vocal choices, Celentano spoke and sang the "the language of blatantly uneducated, ordinary people," having never learned English and embracing simple lyrics and vocabulary.[165] During the earlier years of his career, the star's music choices may have sought to address a diverse youth audience as well as his own interest in cultural exchange. Sergio Cotti notes that Celentano's fourth album, *New Orleans* (1963), was especially diverse with it inclusion of genres from multiple cultures—from American rock'n'roll, crooner jazz, and charleston, to Argentine tango, and Cuban cha-cha-chà.[166]

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[164] Massimo Locatelli, The Birth of Pop, 51

[165] Paolo Prato, "Virtuosity and Populism," 168.

[166] Sergio Cotti, *Adriano Celentano. 1957-2007: Cinquant'anni da ribelle* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 2007). 41.

While all the *urlatori* and their music were predominantly influenced by rock'n'roll, many of the artists, like Celentano, incorporated a variety of musical styles in their albums during the 1960s, "spanning all musical genres with no distinction."[167] In the second half of the decade, Prato describes many of Celentano's songs as engaged with the political and social issues of the period. Some of the most famous were "Il ragazzo della via gluck" ("The Boy on Gluck Street," 1966), and "Un albero di trenta piani" ("A Tree of Thirty Floors," 1972), which addressed the hardships of growing up in an industrialized city, "Ciao ragazzi" ("Hi Kids," 1965), a call to youths to stick together during times of change, and "Chi non lavora non fa l'amore" ("He Who Doesn't Work Doesn't Make Love," 1970), a lament about the societal pressures to enter into a workforce filled with strikes and inequality. The messages in Celentano's albums of the mid '60s to early '70s seem contradictory to the values represented by youth entertainment during the economic boom, a period in which the *musicarello* was idealizing urban and tourist cities (many of the films were set in Rome or vacation spots like Capri or Amalfi) and closely aligned with the emerging consumer culture. However, Celentano's rapid transformation in values throughout this period is an important indicator that he sought to authentically reflect the concerns of his audience, and that he seemed to have grown along with his fans by sharing similar values.

Returning to a discussion of Celentano in the early '60s, the star's persona was largely influenced by American rock'n'roll singers, especially Elvis Presley, who is often

[167] "Celentano ormai spazia attraverso tutti i generi musicali senza fare differenza." Ibid.

noted for his unconventional masculinity; Elvis, who was "'prettier than most women' ... not only crosses but confuses gender boundaries."[168] Celentano was often referred to as "il molleggiato" ("springy"), a nickname that emerged due to his disjointed and spastic dancing, in the same way that Elvis's dance moves became an iconic facet of his persona. Gundle explains that while both Jerry Lewis and Elvis were large influences on the star, Celentano's dancing was not erotic or sexually charged like the "leg wiggling and pelvic thrusts that in Elvis had so alarmed American conservatives," and Celentano's were instead movements of nonsense and absurdity. [169] Gundle believes Celentano's taming of rock'n'roll stems from the star's Catholic upbringing, but the absence of promiscuity is quite common in the *musicarelli*, even in those starring other Elvis-inspired stars like Little Tony and Bobby Solo. I would claim that even though Celentano's rock'n'roll (both in music and performance) was less suggestive than the American artists that inspired him, his performances in *Uno strano tipo* are disruptive of normative gender representation because his fictional doppelgänger's parody and feminization of Celentano's public persona.

*Uno strano tipo* use of the trope critiques conventional definitions of masculinity by focusing on an inept look-alike or doppelgänger who impersonates a star, and Celentano plays both roles—his star persona, who I refer to as Adriano, and his doppelgänger, Peppino. The musician arrives at Amalfi with his girlfriend and his

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[168] Sheila Whitely, *Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender* (London: Routledge, 1997), xxiv.

[169] Stephen Gundle, "Adriano Celentano and the Origins of Rock and Roll in Italy," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 11.3 (2006): 374.

*urlatori* band, *I Ribelli* (an British beat band), on vacation. However, upon his arrival the locals yell at and disrespect the star thinking he is Peppino, an illiterate resident with a stutter, unibrow, and awkward mannerisms. Is it at this point that we learn the resident, looking exactly like Adriano aside form his unibrow and mannerisms, impersonates the star for attention, and that that Peppino has impregnated and fled from his girlfriend Carmelina. The entirety of the film thus revolves around the comical misunderstandings and identity switching of Peppino and Adriano in numerous scenes in which they switch places. These mix-ups are largely comical due to the characters' exaggerated body language, their clumsy and confused behavior, and the film's overall meta-reference to and parody of stardom. Through antithetical characters that are frequently mistaken for each other, the doubling trope's underlying sense of performative identity, fragmented self, and incompetence (the figure of the *inetto*) deserve to challenge singular conceptions of masculinity.

While literary critics, psychologists, and theorists have frequently analyzed the double/doppelgänger in discussions of the self, Caroline Ruddell asserts that it has been largely neglected in film criticism.[170] Her recent publication, *The Besieged Ego: Doppelgangers and Split Identity On Screen* (2013), analyzes the device in various genres of contemporary American film. She explains that directors may choose to visually represent split identities through the double for various reasons, such as for

[170] Caroline Ruddell, *The Besieged Ego: Doppelgangers and Split Identity Onscreen* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 4.

providing narrative progression, "character motivation, and above all, spectacle."[171] According to Ruddell, the trope can be analyzed in terms of cultural and social struggles, but that one of its most disruptive uses is its complication of gender identity. When two characters embody contrasting masculinities or femininities, focus moves away from heterosexual relationships and conflicts to that of the character's relation to him or herself, contrary to Polcini's assertion; in other words, the double sheds light on processes of identification.[172] *Uno strano tipo*'s narrative is focused on the comedic switching of the two doubled characters and their confused reactions, and their romantic relationships ultimately serve to illuminate their passiveness toward women, and to further contrast the two identities or selves. In light of the function of doppelgängers in cinematic texts, Fulci's *musicarello* can similarly be examined as promoting discourse on the self and fragmented gender subjectivity by bonding the double with acts of performance (both via impersonation and musical numbers).

One such example of performativity self occurs during one of the character mix-ups, in which Peppino must perform in place of the real star. Adriano's manager (Erminio Macario) forces Peppino to sing on stage, thinking he is the real musician, while Peppino's fake manager (Taranto) is behind stage preparing a music track to which the impersonator can lip-sync. It is not until he completes the first chorus that Peppino realizes the manager has mistakenly chosen a track with a female voice. The camera then cuts to Adriano's girlfriend and her father, the latter laughing and remarks, "It seems to

[171] Ibid., 2-3.

[172] Ibid., 83.

me that Celentano fellow is also sophisticated as a man!" a sarcastic commentary on both the star's lack of poise and spastic dancing.[173] Immediately prior to going on stage Peppino jumps and moves frantically in the hallway, the fake manager exasperatedly asks him what he is doing, to which the double responds, "I'm doing the Celentano!"[174] Not only does this performance feminize Peppino, his body language is agitated and frantic on stage because of his awkward personality and musical incompetence, an exaggeration and parody of Celentano's own performance style.

The segment above exemplifies how the cycle capitalized on a star's persona, but more striking is the fact that Celentano is parodying himself through Peppino by exaggerating his dancing to an even more absurd degree. Many other film segments indicate that the star is in fact creating a caricature of his own star status and on-screen persona. For example, soon after Adriano's arrival, he and his band enter a local bar and local young men approach them to tease the star about his appearance. One explains that he is more handsome and taller than he appears on television, and another chimes in to exclaim that Adriano has been "mistaken for a monkey," likely a description attributed his spastic dancing and stage mannerisms.[175] As the young men continue to hassle the musician and question if he is truly the star they are used to seeing on-screen, Adriano's manager sets them straight by stating that it is really him, "the one who wrote '24,000

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[173] "Mi sa che quel Celentano è sofisticato anche come uomo!" Note the use of "that" in the sentence ( "quel"), a reference to the star as having multiple personae.

[174] "Faccio il Celentano!"

[175] "ti sbagli con la scimmia!"

Baci'" (the star's hit single of that year). The film explicitly references Celentano's actual star persona by using his entire name (most *musicarelli* only name their characters after the star's first name), his famous physical attributes, and his dance style. These references allow the narrative to not only mock the musician but to openly acknowledge that there is always some distance between a star and his performance—that their appearance and characterization is always intentionally constructed. In other words, it becomes difficult to distinguish the real from the performance, and this is a notion that camp performances and narratives expose—how one's self-presentation is always performative or theatrical to some degree. *Uno strano tipo* also exemplifies the complicated nature of stardom in the *musicarelli* narratives and structure; by 1) casting Celentano as two characters, 2) explicitly referencing and parodying his star persona via his doppelgänger, and 3) choosing a star that began his career by imitating other musicians, the film reminds viewers that stardom and public persona's are always performative.

A significant element of all three personae—the two fictional characters and the actor himself—is their rendering as an *inetto*, characters who are comically inept and confused. In multiple scenes Adriano is characterized as vulnerable around women and incompetent at traditional male/paternal roles or responsibilities. The sequence in which Peppino performs on stage in lieu of Adriano alternates concurrently with scenes in which the real star is kidnapped by a group of angry young women dressed as "greasers" (black leather jackets and white shirts) and smoking cigarettes.[176] The women forcibly

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[176] The term "greasers" refers to an American youth subculture in the 1950s. The lifestyle was typically followed by young men and teens associated with rock'n'roll culture. The style included leather jackets,

grab Adriano and take him to the local nightclub, believing they are kidnapping Peppino and punishing him for his womanizing. The women surround him menacingly while threatening to physically harm him. At the same moment in which Peppino is lip-syncing at the hotel for wealthy tourists, Adriano is literally backed into a corner by the local women. He finally agrees to their demand to perform on stage, a request meant to reveal that Peppino is a fraud; however, the star performs flawlessly and the crowd realizes he is really Adriano. The two characters' helplessness and confusion around women is a recurring theme throughout the film. For example, just after Adriano's arrival in Amalfi he walks along the beach and is soon confronted by Carmelina, who is enraged and mistakes him for Peppino. The camera contrasts Adriano's placement in the sand with Carmelina, who is standing on a neighboring rock looking down at him with a rifle. His first instinct is to run away from the young woman rather than speaking to her and resolving the misunderstanding, prompting Carmelina to furiously chase him down the beach with her rifle in hand. Hilarity ensues in another scene in which Adriano fails to take care of Carmelina and Peppino's newborn during another identity mix-up. Neither Adriano nor his bandmates can quiet the crying baby, they scream and frantically try to calm the infant by giving it sandwich, chocolate, whisky, and a cigarette. When all else fails, they perform a song in order to mask the cries rather than soothing the child.

Peppino is similarly incompetent and confused, but often as a consequence of his lack of education and clumsy behavior. Here the bumbling double reverses the traditional

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greased hair, and images that reflected their "rebellious" nature, such as smoking. Notable American icons include Marlon Brando, James Dean, and Elvis Presley.

masculine norms through his unique characterization as inept—as uneducated, and often confused and cowardly. Reich explains that the *inetto* is "passive rather than active, cowardly rather than brave, and physically or emotionally impotent rather than powerful, always in direct opposition to the deeply rooted masculine norms of Italian culture."[177] Peppino is a womanizer that has impregnated a young woman, the definition of stereotypical male virility (procreation and sexual competence), but, like Adriano he is too cowardly to confront Carmelina and her mother. It is not until the film's conclusion that Peppino and Adriano happily return to their girlfriends after all misunderstandings are resolved and the women's concerns are mitigated. Peppino is fearful around Carmelina and her mother, avoiding them and comically hiding from them throughout the entire film. This passiveness around women inquires into whether male "virility" is enough to salvage or prevent male failure, or, on the other hand, whether it is necessary for domestic happiness.

*Uno strano tipo* indeed acknowledges the figure of the *inetto* that was common in postwar cinema through Celentano's multiple personae, but they neither endure tragic ends nor demonstrate any kind of character development and self-improvement. The two protagonists represent differing types of masculinity that also question traditional masculine norms, including the hyper-masculine rock'n'roll artist. Both characters ultimately gain happy endings in which they marry their respective girlfriends and are acknowledged as heroes by the locals. By offering the characters a happy ending that is

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[177] Jacqueline Reich, "Stars, Gender, and Nation: Marcello Mastroianni and Italian Masculinity," 49-60. In *Screening Genders*, ed. Krin Gabbard and William Luhr (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 52.

not dependent on changing their behaviors, but rather by openly accepting it, their fear of and vulnerability around confident women suggests that one can still be happy without a traditionally patriarchal family structure. For young viewers seeking role models from stars it is important that the film treats shifting masculinities and ineptness as inherent qualities of the protagonists. There may have also been more potential for this narrative to connect with youth audiences and fans because of its illusion of intimacy between viewers/fans and Celentano.

Through the incorporation of the doppelgänger, the three Celentano identities (Adriano, Peppino, and the real star) encourage viewers to question which ego is ideal, or whether an essential identity actually exists. According to Ruddell, the ideal is always "delusory" because this trope will often discourage viewers from identifying with and trusting the "ideal" ego that is usually performed by the doppelgänger.[178] Adriano and Peppino complicate notions of masculine performance, and although the characters are contrasted primarily in their social class and education, neither is hyper-masculine nor entirely inept or feminized. There is no apparent "ideal" masculine ego in *Uno strano tipo*, and the notion of the "delusory" ideal is more relevant to the film's critique of stardom. Celentano's depiction of himself and his impersonation of American rock'n'roll artists such as Elvis and Jerry Lewis highlights how 1960s Italian cinema was beginning to demystify the star system and produce stars that were more representative of everyday life and performativity. Amanda Howell maintains that one of the ways in which

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[178] Ibid., 88.

rock'n'roll musical films sought to form a bond between youth audiences and cinema was to "create a new type of cinematic masculinity."[179] As a white American musician who approached music as a process of cultural exchange (I also noted a similar level of cultural diversity in Celentano's early music career), Howell comments that "if anyone understood that masculinity—particularly the sort of rock'n'roll masculinity that he performed on stage—was a cultural construction, it was Elvis."[180] Presley's cultural influences and desire to make "the male body a source of visual confrontation and delight" are testaments of his performativity.[181] Celentano's performances were likewise progressive in comparison to other traditional Italian musicians of the period, such as Mina and Morandi who expressed sentimentality simply through their voice and minimal body movements, but Celentano was still quite subdued compared to American rock'n'roll artists. [182]

Although his taming of Elvis's music and dancing tamed the sexual charge of rock masculinity for Italian viewers, Celentano's self-parody is subversive in the farcical depiction of both stardom and masculinity. Given Celentano's association with Elvis, *Uno strano tipo* exemplifies the way in which the *musicarelli* singers shifted away from perceptions of rock'n'roll stars as erotic and hyper-masculine. Enrica Capussotti touches

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[179] Amanda Howell, *Popular Film Music and Masculinity in Action: A Different Tune*, (London: Routledge, 2015), 2.

[180] Ibid., 32. See also page 30-31, in which Howell explains Elvis's inspirations from black culture of the 1950s.

[181] Ibid., 30-31.

[182] Gundle, "Adriano Celentano and the Origins," 383.

briefly on the *urlatori* music, cinema, and culture, concluding that "[t]he relationship between Italian culture and American mass culture can best be described in two words: parody and translation," and that the *urlatori* singers' age, non-traditional performances, and body images—including Celentano's often nonsensical performance mannerisms—were "a crucial mirror and vehicle for the experience of a new generation."[183] Fulci and Celentano adapted and transformed aspects of American culture in a way that may have encouraged viewers to deliberate upon shifting perceptions of masculinity as represented by young stars, especially during a period in which stars were beginning to move away from their status as divas and toward representing everyday experiences.[184]

### PERFORMANCE AND TRIAL-AND-ERROR IN *CUORE MATTO… MATTO DA LEGARE* (1967)

Little Tony starred in at least thirteen *musicarelli* between 1960-1970, making him and Mina the most prevalent stars in the cycle (excluding supporting casts members such as Nino Taranto).[185] Like Celentano, American rock'n'roll artists were highly

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[183] Enrica Capussotti, "Sceneries of Modernity: Youth Culture in 1950s Milan", 169-184. In *Italian Cityscapes: Culture and Urban Change in Contemporary Italy*, ed. Robert Lumley and John Foot (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2004), 180.

[184] Francesco Casetti and Mariagrazia Fanchi refer to this phenomenon as the stars' "myth aura. "Le funzioni sociali del cinema e dei media: dati statistici, ricerche sull'*audience* e storie di consumo," 135-170. In *Spettatori: Forme di consumo e pubblici del cinema in Italia: 1930-1960*, ed. Mariagrazia Fanchi and Elena Mosconi (Venice: Marsilio, 2002), 166.

[185] *I Teddy boys della canzone* (dir. Domenico Paolella, 1960), *5 marine per 100 ragazze* (dir. Mario Mattoli, 1961), *Pesci d'oro e bikini d'argento* (dir. Carlo Veo, 1961), *Canzoni a tempo di twist* (dir. Stefano Canzio, 1962), *Riderà (Cuore matto)* (dir. Bruno Corbucci, 1967), *Peggio per me…meglio per te* (dir. Bruno Corbucci, 1967), *Marinai in coperta* (dir. Bruno Corbucci, 1967), *Cuore matto…matto da legare* (dir. Mario Amendola, 1967), *Zum Zum Zum – La canzone che mi passa per la testa* (dirs. Bruno and Sergio Corbucci, 1968), *Il professor e I suoi hippies* (dir. *Luigi de Maria* (1968), *Donne…botte e bersaglieri* (dir. Ruggero Deodato, 1968), *Zum Zum Zum 2* (dir. Bruno Corbucci, 1969), *W le donne* (dir. Aldo Grimaldi, 1970).

influential on Little Tony's career and image, and by his early teens he was already imitating Elvis, Jerry Lee Lewis, Little Richard and Bill Haley. His impersonation of Presley was even more explicit than Celentano's—from his famous "ciuffo" (the hairstyle also associated with Elvis), americanized fashion (western fringe and embroidered jumpsuits), and his tribute album. Elvis had a considerable influence on the singer's career, and much of Little Tony's early performances were dedicated to impersonating the artist. Just as Fulci's film reexamines masculinity through the figure of the *inetto* by means of the doppelganger and the notion of the fragmented self, Amendola's *Cuore matto…matto da legare* exposes the performative nature of masculinity and youth by showing how acts of performance are a process of maturation and self-discovery. The male protagonists are comically inept and incompetent, demonstrating how performing and trial-and-error are natural processes especially for youth experiencing financial and personal difficulties.

Amendola's comedic narrative exposes performativity by presenting male incompetence and bad luck as part of *l'arte di arrangiarsi* (the art of getting by). Given the cycle's fluidity of generic conventions, it is not surprising that we should run into a film that has a likeness to the *commedia all'italiana* of the same period. Lanzoni explains that the trope originated in the *commedia dell'arte* (sixteenth century theater), in which masks were used to fool both of oneself as well as those around them, and the "representation of an individual trying to get by at any cost, even if s/he must make

significant moral compromises."[186] This is exactly what *Cuore matto*'s protagonists are forced to do—they perform, impersonate, and exhibit moral ambiguity in order to survive as musicians and as young adults seeking personal (romantic) and financial security.

The film is representative of how young Italians sought their own means of independence and work outside of traditional structures, and as a film cycle geared toward youth audiences the act of performing is especially influential for developing selves. The transition from childhood to adulthood is a liminal time (by which I mean a time of transition or in-betweenness) in which adolescents and young adults discover social and cultural roles and their place amongst a larger community. The notion of youth liminality and its connection to performance culture is especially relevant for 1960s Italian youth as a generation that was seeking to distance themselves from their parents and turning to mass media for new models of representation. According to Jon McKenzie, performance has such a large impact on the development of knowledge and power within contemporary societies that it has started to replace the discipline culture of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a phenomenon that Baz Kershaw believes is due to the diffusion of images of performativity in mass media.[187] Adrienne Marie MacLain concludes, "this seepage of [theatrical] performance into everyday life means that social survival has become inextricably bound up with one's ability to *perform* any number of

[186] Lanzoni, *Comedy Italian Style*, 70.

[187] Jon McKenzie, *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance* (London: Routledge, 2001), 18., Baz Kershaw *The Radical in Performance: Between Brecht and Baudrillard* (London: Routledge, 1999), 57. Sources originally cited in: Adrienne Marie MacLain, *Playing on the Edge: Performance, Youth Culture, and the United States Carinalesque*. PhD dissertation (University of California at Santa Barbara: ProQuest, 2006), 41.

culturally-defined roles" (original emphasis).[188] She then contextualizes this discussion for youth communities by claiming that for many young adults there is an encouragement to perform, especially in University or educational environments. Performing is a process for learning and identification, and "trial-and-error attempts at self-discernment" allow for the formation of "necessary external experience and internal insight to become sovereign citizens."[189] While only some of the *musicarelli* narratives are set around Universities or spaces of instruction, *Cuore matto* exemplifies the way in which cinematic depictions of male failure and the *inetto* need not be limited to understandings of male anxiety, in the sense that they are also representative of the type of trial-and-error that youth experience in seeking self-affirmation. In *Cuore matto*, because these scenes of trial-and-error and the "art of getting by" are also comical, they offer a more lighthearted view of failure that eventually leads to success.

The film begins as Tony (Little Tony) arrives in Rome after failing to succeed in the U.S. recording industry. Now currently broke and with no form of employment, Tony returns to his old apartment where he discovers his roommates Marco (Lucio Flauto) and Sandro (Ferruccio Amendola) are similarly destitute. In order to pay rent and avoid eviction the three men decide they should form a band to earn money, but they must first save money to buy their instruments. Unaware of the irony of their situation (needing money to make money), instead of simply finding a well-paying job to support

[188] MacLain, 42.

[189] Ibid., 15.

themselves and their aspirations they scheme odd comical ways of acquiring funds that rely on their performance skills, all but one of which fails to succeed due do to their incompetence and bad luck.

The first mishap of their comic failings occurs when Tony suggests they rent a room to a Mexican ambassador (Fidel Gonzalez) he met on the plane. The roommates sacrifice their own dinner and their entire food reserve to convince the guest to rent a room. Tony soon realizes that the man is not actually an ambassador, and that there had been a misunderstanding caused by their language barrier. The guest states that he is a penniless "caso clinico" (case study) who traveled to Italy to meet researchers interested in studying his "double stomach," which exacerbates the situations by having one more stomach to feed. Sandro then steals a rich man's dog in hopes of receiving a nice reward upon the dog's return. Within a few days his girlfriend stops by their apartment to show them the Missing Dog announcement in the daily paper; however, their unpaying guest fails to shut the door after her entrance, consequently letting the dog escape as everyone helplessly looks over their rooftop to watch it flee.

Unable to fully organize and think through a complicated scheme, and now on the verge of eviction, they decide to use their performance skills to gain funds. Marco dresses up in torn clothes and acts as a beggar, but he discovers the difficultly of making money even as a beggar. While the roommate laments, a decently dressed man stepping out of his parked car and angrily confronts Marco, exclaiming that the stairs they are standing on are his "zone." Looking into Marco's hat, the beggar is shocked at how little he has made on the corner and claims that Marco must have ruined the "clientele," the beggar

then boasts about his own normally generous daily profits. The beggar is introduced as more financially secure than Marco, a young man who is not even competent enough to find charity. Marco and Tony then impersonate tour guides around the Colosseum and the Roman Forum until the police stop them for not having permits. The three men, now in complete desperation, pretend to mourn and make funeral plans for Marco, who lies "dead" in front of their landlord in order to avoid eviction. While all of these schemes fail, they finally succeed when they devise a plan that aligns with their desire to perform on stage. Sandro spots a touring English beat band and offers to guide them to their venue, but he instead locks them in an abandoned shed so that he and his bandmates can take their place on stage. The men dress in British attire and shoulder length wigs, and they cover an English pop song so successfully that they are offered a television and record contract with RAI. After a series of trials and errors, the band's musical/stage performance ultimately leads them to success. Though this success is founded on impersonating other musicians, it is the only scheme in which the roommates are true to their own identities as musicians or stage performers.

Aside from the characters' pileup of failed plans, *Cuore matto*'s romantic narrative demonstrates how the figure of the *inetto* and acts of performance are a part of a learning process in which trial-and-error is an instinctive method for experiencing and understanding gendered roles and behaviors. Unlike many of the *musicarelli* (as observed in *Uno strano tipo),* Amendola's film only details male failure and vulnerability in financial matters rather than in relation to female characters, as Sandro, Marco, Tony, and their guest successfully court or pursue their romantic interests. Tony's romantic pursuit

is particularly noteworthy because it uses the “double” as a means of understanding the protagonist’s internal conflicts concerning traditional gender roles. Just after arriving in Rome, the star meets and falls in love with Carla, a wealthy architecture student, but because of their difference in class, wealth, and education, he feels he must hide his destitute finances and living situation. Tony and Carla begin planning their first date and the scene cuts to Tony’s daydream, in which he visualizes the date going horribly and is unable to pay the bill at a nice restaurant. The scene cuts back to the couple as Tony, now flustered, proclaims that he must cancel the date and walks off in a hurry. While the three musicians’ are normally flagrant and unreserved in undertaking their schemes, Little Tony is ashamed he cannot court Carla according to societal standards. Despite his embarrassment, Tony’s advances remain forward and confident (much like Elvis’s screen characters), but the stigma associated with his aspiring artist lifestyle prompts him to construct—or perform—an alter ego around Carla.

Tony chooses to deal with his shortcomings by creating a false “twin,” but it is also a part of a scheme in which his roommates help his avoid his parents’ matchmaking. Tony’s parents hope to convince him to marry Erminia, the daughter of a wealthy family friend who is in love with him, but the three roommates once again scheme a farcical plot of performances to avoid the arrangement.[190] While Tony is on a date with Erminia, Marco approaches the couple acting as a flamboyant, thick-accented *brigante* (swindler), and he urgently tells Tony to attend their meeting or there will be serious consequences.

[190] Erminia is likely a reference to Torquato Tasso’s *Gerusalemme liberata* (1581), the Princess who is in a one-sided love with the hero.

Sandro, dressed as a police officer, follows Marco's lead by acting like Tony is a wanted criminal. Tony later realizes that Carla had witnessed the date from afar, prompting him to convince her that who she saw was instead his identical twin Pompeo. The three friends now attempt to trick Carla by introducing her to Pompeo, but she questions the twin's thick regional accent, which Tony does not have, and she later notices the same burn mark on both of the twin's hands. Rather than reveal her knowledge of the lie, Carla joins the scheme and demands to see Pompeo and Tony together, but when they claim that the twin is hospitalized she takes further control of the situation. The next day Carla rushes into the group's apartment exclaiming (and lying) that Tony had visited her the previous night to reconcile. After some suspicions and frenzied reactions, Carla reveals that she had been aware of their ploy for some time.

As visualized through the fake twin, the device of the double highlights Tony's incompetence and vulnerability by contrasting him with an astute female character. Furthermore, like Carla, who is not fooled by the men's tricks, Sandro's and Marco's girlfriends are also more observant and pragmatic than the young men in their participations and reactions to the schemes. Tony's embarrassment regarding his inability to meet standards traditionally associated with successful men lead him and his bandmates to create new personae, once more tying the act of performance with methods of coping, trial-and-error, and redefining one's identity. Performances of impersonation, doubling, and music, is central to *Cuore matto* as well as to many *musicarelli* that spotlight the journey and struggles of aspiring musicians. The film's use of these tropes is particularly relevant since it illustrates the use of performing not only in relation to

gender roles and the *inetto*, but also in terms of the everyday trial-and-error of young adults struggling with their aspirations and economic stability.

## Conclusion

The narrative tropes and themes analyzed in this chapter such as masculinity in crisis, the *inetto,* masquerade, impersonation, and the double raise larger questions about the disruptive potential of musical films as a camp or queer genre. As highlighted in the selected *musicarelli*, the role of performance extends beyond the stage, screen, or lyrics to the performance of fragmented or uncertain subjectivities and gender roles. I have also detailed how these narratives promote discourse on how performance and inconstancy are prevalent in everyday experiences, especially for youth audiences. For this reason, the cycle provides a valuable resource for understanding and reevaluating gender discourses provoked by postwar cinema, such as, but not limited to, discussions of masculinity in crisis. The films in this chapter are also indicative of the cycle's participation in the changing role of stardom in the 1960s by parodying or imitating stars that previously represented national and societal values. The star system is indeed a powerful tool with its ability to challenge, encourage, or create values for changing societies, and as Yvonne Tasker rightly states, "the star image is also the territory of identity, the process of the forging and reforging of ways of 'being human' in which a point of certainty is never ultimately arrived at," and of which constant reformulation is necessary as humans

continue to grow and change.[191] The young *musicarello* singers are examples of how stars were no longer mythologized, but instead models of everyday Italians attempting to survive financially or socially in period of social, cultural, and economic transition.

[191] Yvonne Tasker, "Dumb Movies for Dumb People: Masculinity, the body, and the voice in contemporary action cinema," 230-244. In *Screening the Male: Exploring Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema*, ed. Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark (London: Routledge, 1993), 233-234.

# Chapter Four: Hybridity and Queering in Rita Pavone's *Musicarelli*: Rethinking Genre and (Young) Women's Representation

Adriano Celentano and Little Tony provide excellent examples of male figures that are unapologetically vulnerable, inept, and at times feminized by their doubled or fragmented film characters, but the queer and camp undertones of the Italian cycle are most explicit in those starring Rita Pavone. The young star's fluctuating representations of gender, such as her characters' gender role reversals and imitations of excessive femininity, are accentuated by hybrid and meta-cinematic narratives that call upon and parody other film genres or categories. To further my investigation of the *musicarello* as camp, this chapter examines how Pavone's films emphasize notions of queering and hybridity (the mixing and/or blurring distinct categories) through alternative representations of femininity, musical performance, and cinematic form that underline notions of youth and gender as performative.

Pavone's presence in Italian postwar entertainment spanned all media forms, as did many of the *musicarelli* singers/actors, but I center my analysis on three of her most well known musicals—*Rita la zanzara* (1966), *Non stuzzicate la zanzara* (1967), and *Little Rita nel west* (1967). In my examination of these films I discuss how Pavone's performances resist and destabilize gender binaries, and they films abide by or disrupt current definitions of the "woman's film." While cultural historians have previously noted Pavone's androgynous fashion choices (in the sense that she often performed in men's fashion) and childlike physicality, her *musicarello* performances remain largely

unexamined. Pavone's films represent a large subset of female-centered *musicarelli*, and because her narratives are particularly queered in terms of both gender and genre (parodying other genres or film conventions), my examination of her filmography offers new perspectives on how unconventional female narratives can be positioned within genre studies. I illustrate how her films reference genres traditionally targeted toward male audiences, specifically the western film, while also modifying those with primarily female audiences, like the "woman's film" and fairy tales. As such, Pavone's films offer less confining forms of female narratives by combining, altering, and at times parodying both female and male-dominated narratives. This queering of gendered genres (those with a male or female spectatorship) works alongside the young star's tomboy characters and her critique of excessive femininity to offer alternative female perspectives and representations of empowerment. With this study I seek to expand current understandings of the "woman's film" by exploring how queered female narratives and representations of girlhood may add to existing scholarship on female narratives.

### PAVONE'S STAR PERSONA IN THE '60S

Much like the longstanding fame of Celentano and Mina, it is difficult to find an Italian unfamiliar with Pavone, but while recent academic discussions on 1950s-60s popular music attend to Celentano's and Mina's particularities in Italian entertainment, there has been less study on Pavone despite being arguably the most progressive female figure of the 1960s youth music culture. Thin, freckled, and with red cropped hair, Pavone frequently oscillated between gender-normative clothing in the '60s, between

wearing dresses and skirts in one performance to pants and suspenders in another. The star not only withdrew from traditional representations of femininity through her androgynous fashion choices, her lyrics also promoted female empowerment and independence. Lina Wertmüller cast Pavone as the unruly boy protagonist in the RAI television musical miniseries *Il giornalino di Gian Burrasca* (1964-1965), an adaptation of Luigi Bertelli's children's book series. It is likely this casting decision was based on Pavone's childlike physical features and spritely performances, but also because her "androgynous body" was a unique public image "in a symbolic universe still in thrall to traditional images of masculinity and femininity."[192] Although the miniseries is the only musical narrative in which she plays a male character, Pavone's *musicarelli* trouble images of femininity by emphasizing the star's fashion choices and physicality, in addition to more explicit critiques of gendered behavior such as cross-dressing and gender role reversals.

Like most of the *musicarello*, stars Pavone had a frequent presence on television, film, radio, and in magazines. The few studies dedicated to the star focus on this intermedial stardom and rightly view Pavone as an icon of the intermediality of the 1960s entertainment industry. Umberto Eco dedicated an entire section to Pavone in his essay on popular music and mass culture, "La canzone di consumo" (loosely translated, "Mass Consumption Songs"), in which he attributed her success and fame to her presence in all media outlets during an era of mass consumption rather than to her talent. This essay was

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[192] Enrica Capussotti, "Sceneries of Modernity: Youth Culture in 1950s Milan," 169-184. In *Italian Cityscapes: Culture and Urban Change in Contemporary Italy,* ed. Robert Lumley and John Foot (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2004), 180.

published in 1965, so it is worth remembering that Eco's judgment recalls how critics and older generations of the period critiqued the new youth music and consumer culture of the late '50s and '60s. Maria Francesca Piredda instead views the singer's intermediality as extending beyond the literal (in media) to symbolize her ability to address different audiences, thereby mediating conflicts between teenagers and adults as well as between different social classes.[193] This is an apt observation of the cultural and economic context of the 1960s and Italy's postwar modernization—a period in which the entertainment industry was becoming largely commercialized and representative of a postwar consumer culture. Extending this conversation, I analyze Pavone's performances and *musicarelli* in terms of queered gender representation, which I argue is another facet of social and cultural modernization in terms of identity politics. I believe that a significant, yet often overlooked aspect of Pavone's mediating potential stems from her androgynous fashion and queered film performances in which she addresses fluid gender representation as a mediation of generational differences in cultural and gender ideologies.

Similar to my own reading of Pavone's fluid gender representation, Deborah Toschi explores Pavone's intermediality in terms of the star's physical appearances. Toschi notes that Pavone frequently impersonated stars in film and television—an act I will detail in my analysis of her *zanzara* films—and altered her vocals and attire between performances, traits that expose "dichotomies of youth/maturity, Italian/American, and

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[193] Maria Francesca Piredda, "'Non è facile avere 18 anni.' Rita Pavone icone intermediale nell'industria culturale italiana degli anni Sessanta", 265-278. In *Tra due crisi: Urbanizzazione, mutamenti sociali e cultura di massa tra gli anni Trenta e gli anni Settanta*, ed. Matteo Pasetti (Bologna: CLUEB, 2013), 274.

femininity/masculinity," as well as gender performativity.[194] She quotes an interview in which Pavone states her preference for modern, less feminine clothing by the 1960's French designer André Courrèges; "I detest women's clothing: the Courrèges' clothes aren't clothes that make you feel decorated. They're functional, fun, comfortable, and new."[195] According to Toschi, Pavone's stage costumes and disguises ("travestimento") question definitions of femininity by constructing "un'idea mutante del personaggio" (an idea of a mutable personality/character) in a way that parallels how teenagers mimic and experiment with subjectivities.[196] This analysis of Pavone's persona as being malleable or fluid is extremely relevant to my analysis, and while Toschi does briefly mention the *zanzara* films, her article focuses primarily on cultural and transnational reception of Pavone's performances. My study instead views Pavone's performances specifically through a queer lens by analyzing not only her on-screen representations of femininity, but also the ways in which her films queer traditional female narratives through adaptation and parody.

In addition to Pavone's preference for French fashion, her *zanzara* character frequently references "yè-yè" culture (and other female singers of the '60s, such as Caterina Caselli and Patty Pravo, were also categorized as yè-yè singers). This term

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[194] "…alle dicotomie giovinezza/maturità, italianità/americanità e femminilità/mascolinità". Deborah Toschi, "Maschere e vocalità di una ragazza yè-yè: Il caso di Rita Pavone", *Comunicazioni Sociali* 1 (2011): 83.

[195] My translation. "detesto i vestiti da donna: i vestiti di Courrèges non sono vestiti che ti fanno sentire addobbata. Sono abiti funzionali, divertenti, comodi, nuovi." Ibid., 73.

[196] Ibid., 82.

offers insight into how Pavone represented alternative femininity and female empowerment. Yé-yé was a colloquial term throughout Western Europe, particularly in Italy and France, signifying popular music inspired by British beat culture and American rock'n'roll, its name based on a recurring vocal motif (similar to "doo-wop" music).[197] While both male and female singers participated in the spread of yé-yé culture, young women and teenage girls were more active within this culture. Jonathyne Briggs argues that many female teenagers of the French yé-yé movement represented the 1960s women's sexual revolution through their lyrics and coquettish fashion and public appearances.[198] This perspective of "yé-yé girls" as models of female independence and sexual freedom is especially relevant in Italian entertainment since many young Italian female yé-yé singers were also considered symbols of female empowerment and sexual liberation.[199]

Pavone's representations of fluid identity are not only evident in her fashion choices, she also fluctuated between images of girlhood and adulthood; despite her youthful look (she was always older than the protagonists she played) her characters couple with older men, and the star also married co-star who was twice her age. These unstable images of age and femininity work along with her intermediality to call upon notions of hybridity—the intersection and blurring of two or more conceived categories.

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[197] Jonathyne Briggs, "Sex and the Girl's Single: French Popular Music and the Long Sexual Revolution of the 1960s," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 21.3 (2012): 528.

[198] Ibid.

[199] Diego Giachetti, *Nessuno Ci Può Giudicare : Gli Anni Della Rivolta Al Femminile*. (Roma: DeriveApprodi, 2005).

Furthermore, I will show how Pavone's impersonations, costuming, cross-dressing, and female masculinity function alongside "hybrid" narratives in which the films themselves call upon, parody, and ultimately queer other film genres. Because Pavone's films intentionally reference other genres, the star's representation of queerness and hybrid (plural, unstable) identity is also manifest in the films' structure, mise-en-scène, and narrative conventions.

As part of the growing interest in gender and genre studies, both American and Italian film scholarship have sought to determine patterns of women's representation in and female spectatorship for different cinematic genres or narratives. Groupings of films with similar narrative patterns and female-targeted audiences emerged as critics, academics, and popular media created labels like the "woman's film," the "girly film," and "chick flicks." Pavone's films in particular exemplify how the *musicarelli* disrupt conventional categories of female narratives by recalling other genres and film conventions, specifically the spaghetti western, fairy tale narratives, and the woman's film, and to a certain extent the male-dominated comedies of the 1960s.

Many musical numbers in Pavone's films visualize fantasy or desire through (day)dreams, impersonation, masquerade, and child-like "play." These sequences call on tropes of imagination and marginal spaces, characteristics already inherent to musical films, to emphasize gender and youth performativity.[200] Such tropes visualize desire in a

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[200] See also Robynn J. Stilwell's text on diagetic music in cinema, which I review in detail in Chapter 3. "The Fantastical Gap Between Diegetic and Nondiegetic", 185-202. *In Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema*, ed. Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer, and Richard Leppert. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 197.

way that illustrates how gender and youth subjectivities are performative, fluid, and "hybrid," but they also function as comedy and parody. In other words, I argue that these same strategies of hybridity are those often associated with camp, in which the mixing of boundaries sheds light on the potential for theatricality, artifice, and playfulness in everyday life.[201]

Since film musicals naturally foster discourse on desire because of their imaginative nature, the female-centered *musicarelli* are a valuable addition to current discussions on women's representation since the "woman's film" is often discussed in terms of female desire/imagination. Pam Cook states that the woman's film is associated with daydreams and fantasy, "locating women's desires in the imaginary, where they have always traditionally been placed."[202] The entire *musicarello* cycle attends to male and female protagonists alike, and unlike many of the postwar genres and cycles, this is perhaps the only collection of films in the 1940s-60s that is divided between both male and female centered narratives. Women were still struggling with disempowerment in the '60s, a time in which they actively sought agency and social equality. New models of womanhood and/or femininity emerged for young women and adolescents represented by the *musicarelli* stars—young singers whose relatable age, fashion, and behavior contrasted the previous exotic, full-bodied divas and maternal figures of the 1940s-50s

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[201] Susan Sontag, "Notes on Camp," 53- 65. In *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject*, ed. Fabio Cleto. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).

[202] Pam Cook, "Melodrama and the Woman's Picture", 248-262. In *Imitations of Life: A Reader on Film & Television Melodrama*, ed. Marcia Landy (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 248.

melodramas.[203] The *musicarello*'s inclusion of both male and female points of view is unique from other postwar Italian genres, but it is a collection of films that has been neglected by feminist film critics, most of whom overlook musicals in their studies on the "woman's film."

**WHAT IS A "WOMAN'S FILM," ANYWAY?**

The musical, as inherently hybrid, often walks the line between comedy and melodrama, and is set with narratives typical of other genres—there is a reason Altman describes two of his three theorized types of musicals as "folk" and "fairy tale," both of which recall other genres (historically set dramas and romantic dramedies, respectively). But what happens to discussions of female narratives when the musical uses its hybridity to challenge the notion of "gendered" genres? Pavone's films are excellent objects of study for this inquiry since they offer empowering female narratives that challenge both normative female (the "woman's films") and male dominated genres (the western and adventure film as noted by Molly Haskell, as well as much of postwar Italian comedy).[204] Some points of address in my study are: how female-focused comedic and hybrid cinema encourage new perspectives about the "woman's film," like which genres or conventions are associated with it, and how the *musicarelli* in particular aid film critics in examinations of female narratives in Italian cinema. Furthermore, while Italian film

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[203] Stephen Gundle details the difference of female beauty standards between the immediate postwar period and the '60s in his study on Italian actresses in *Bellissima: Feminine Beauty and the Idea of Italy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

[204] Molly Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies* (New York: Penguin, 1975).

studies have provided excellent scholarship on how women's representation has changed over time, there has been far less attention on female adolescents, teens, and young adults. The *musicarelli* therefore provides a resource for understanding female narratives targeted to different age groups, and how representations of girlhood can be used to symbolize larger notions of the self as mobile and in process.[205] American film scholarship has discussed musical cinema in terms of camp and hybrid cinema, and my reading of queered imagery in terms of genre, gender, and the in-betweenness (or liminality) of youth subjectivity discuss the way in which Pavone's films offer queered female narratives to a modern youth audience.

Female-centered *musicarelli* employ features typical of the "woman's film," a term detailed by Maria LaPlace to describe narratives that revolve around a female protagonist. She posits that certain tropes originated from nineteenth-century women's fiction, such as the woman's "personal triumph over adversity," the "self-made woman," and the "cultivating [of] a new sense of self-worth and acquiring knowledge."[206] Other narrative conventions are a female point of view, relationships between women, and spaces of traditionally female experience such as domestic and romantic affairs.[207] While I will focus primarily on Pavone's films, Caselli's films also serve as a useful example of

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[205] Catherine Driscoll states that girl figures represent "an idea of mobility preceding the fixity of womanhood and implying an unfinished process of personal development." *Girls: Feminine Adolescence in Popular Culture and Cultural Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 47.

[206] Maria LaPlace, "Producing and Consuming the Woman's Film: Discursive Struggle in *Now Voyager*", 138-166. In *Home is Where the Heart is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Films*, ed. Christine Gledhill (London: British Film Institute, 1987), 151-152.

[207] Ibid., 139.

these conventions in female-centered *musicarelli* while also breaking from the preceding woman's film's of the Italian postwar era. *Nessuno mi può giudicare* (1966) and its sequel *Perdono* (1966) cast Caselli and Laura Efrikian as cousins, Caselli starring as an aspiring singer and Efrikian as a student working at a *grande magazzino* (department store) in Rome. The films undoubtedly revolve around a female POV, but they are unique to the cycle because they focus on two female protagonists that offer contrasting images of femininity and gender performance. Even though they are cast as cousins the two characters have differing ambitions, perspectives on romance, fashion, and physical features.

In *Nessuno*, Laura's (Efrikian) story follows a typical boy meets girl story, but many of her scenes are set in the department store where she must overcome obstacles to maintain her integrity as an employee; she rejects sexual advances from her boss and is later framed by him in his attempt to fire her. Despite Laura's stereotypical femininity (long hair tied with a bow, waist-defining skirts) and that her story attends to a heteronormative romance, she still expresses a form of personal freedom and resilience relatable to girls of the period who were seeking independence through work and activities outside of the home.[208] Laura's narrative incorporates conventions of the woman's film—a female POV, personal triumph, and the relationship with her female cousin—but she empowers images of traditional femininity and women's roles by replacing domestic concerns with her work experiences. Her opportunities for agency and

[208] Paul Ginsborg. *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943-1988* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 249.

female empowerment do occur outside of the home, but her happy ending remains dependent on a man. Many contemporary "chick flicks," a genre Roberta Garrett discusses as a type of "woman's film," also follow this conventional trope in which a woman's ambitions and happiness are still ultimately "understood in relation to men."[209]

Alternatively, Caterina (Caselli) sports a short blunt haircut, sweaters, and jeans, a look also typical for her off-screen persona. She works alongside Laura at the department store but meets up with her band and practices music in her free time. Caterina is so involved with her music that she turns down a date, stating that she is unavailable because she is already in love with the bar at which she and her band perform. The singer challenges traditional definitions of the woman's film by not only representing female empowerment outside of the home, but by actively pushing away romantic suitors. By having two female leads, Caterina's choices appear more progressive when compared to that of her cousin, but both Laura's and Caterina's youth experiences outside of the home are a departure from the Italian woman's film that preceded the *musicarelli*, the 1940s and '50s melodramas that centralized the motherhood and the importance of family.[210]

Laura and Caterina exemplify how female *musicarelli* stars deviated from previous cinematic Italian female stars, from the wives and mothers of the fascist period that endured throughout 1940s cinema and the *maggiorate fisiche* of the 1950s.[211] Mary

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[209] Roberta Garrett, *Postmodern Chick Flicks: The Return of the Woman's Film* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 94.

[210] Mary P. Wood's "Gender Representations and Gender Politics" in *Italian Cinema* (Oxford: Berg, 2005).

[211] Ibid.

P. Wood describes the '50s as the period of "flesh and abundance" for females stars, many of who were discovered in Miss Italia beauty contests and chosen for their "fleshy and well-endowed bodies."[212] Young stars of the 1960s instead adopted trends emerging from British mod culture, following slim-figured stars such as Twiggy and Jean Shrimpton who chose to showcase their modern fashion sense rather than their body shape.[213] Pavone's preference for Courrèges's clothing, while French, was very similar to (and likely inspired by) U.K. mod fashion. Stephen Gundle's history of Italian female stardom notes Caselli's subversive persona, stating that "The blonde … whose declarations of autonomy in "Nessuno mi può giudicare" struck a widespread chord, was a tomboy who broke all accepted canons of femininity" (a reference to her song, not the film).[214] Gundle notes that Caselli's fashion and rebellion from traditional conceptions of femininity are certainly cause for attention in star studies, but it is surprising that Gundle neglects any mention of Pavone, whose star persona and physicality contrasted even more with the seductress figures of the period (i.e. Claudia Cardinale, Catherine Spaak, Anita Ekberg, and Sofia Loren) and "the continuing appeal of Mediterranean beauty" from the 1940s and 1950s.[215]

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[212] Ibid., 166.

[213] Gundle, *Bellissima,* 179.

[214] Ibid., 178.

[215] Ibid., 177, 185.

Caselli's and Pavone's music also plays a part in her character's rupture from previous female representation in the Italian "woman's film." Diego Giachetti's book on Italian culture and female sexual liberation dedicates an entire chapter to the young female singers of the '60s and their progressive lyrics. He explains that Pavone and Caselli encouraged love without marriage and "the freedom to be able to choose the 'man of gold,'" and that "to find him one needed to search for him in a multitude of experiences" or places.[216] The song is incorporated into and the namesake of the sequel film, *Perdono*, in which Laura's boyfriend Federico (Fabrizio Moroni) and Caterina form a relationship while taking an English course together. Caterina is then forced to choose between love and her cousin's friendship when Federico expresses romantic feelings for her. A principal trope that Doane ascribes to the woman's love story is the act of choosing, some form of decision that a woman usually confronts toward the end of a narrative. She argues that women's melodramatic love stories are marked by waiting, departures, and arrivals, rather than progression. While *Perdono* is exemplary of this trope, and is indeed the more melodramatic of the two films, the choice that Caterina makes is to maintain female friendship instead of romance.[217] By giving importance to female friendships instead of heteronormative romantic, *Perdono* (both the film and the

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[216] "la libertà di poter scegliere 'l'uomo d'oro'", "per trovarlo bisognava cercarlo in una pluralità di esperienze". This term, "l'uomo d'oro", is a reference to Caselli's song of the same name, which she preformed in *Nessuno mi può giudicare*. Diego Giachetti, *Nessuno Ci Può Giudicare*, 28.

[217] Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 106.

namesake song) offer a modern perspective on romance by suggesting there will be other "men of gold" in the future.

Despite the broad definitions of the term "woman's film" as a film that addresses female spectators and their assumed concerns, most film critics have analyzed the concept only within certain genres or narrative styles. The majority of woman's film scholars focus on melodramas, especially those examining earlier cinema, namely Maria LaPlace, Pam Cook, Mary Ann Doane, Christine Gledhill, and Molly Haskell. Cook even suggests that the woman's film is a "sub-category" of melodrama because the genre is particularly useful for understanding "how women are positioned under patriarchy so that we can formulate strategies for change."[218] Despite the argument that melodramas offer exemplary female narratives, many of these scholarly discussions recognize the oppressive nature of creating categorizations and definitions of a woman's film. By labeling certain settings, mise-en-scène, and tropes as female, Cook argues that critics are simultaneously acknowledging the importance of women's representation while also marginalizing them via sexual difference.[219] Haskell made a similar claim regarding marginalization almost two decades prior; that labeling a "woman's film" as such discourages critics from adequately examining the films and their differences, therefore implying that women's concerns are inconsequential.[220] Haskell's observation alludes to a topic less explored by feminist film scholars and it speaks directly to my concern about

[218] Cook, "Melodrama and the Woman's Picture", 248, 250.

[219] Ibid., 252.

[220] Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape*, 154-155.

discussions of the woman's film. There seems to be an overall lack of scholarship on how female narratives from other genres (outside of melodramas and the "chick flick" or "rom-com" in contemporary cinema) fit within or alter definitions of the woman's film. As Doane rightly asserts, "The woman's film is not a 'pure' genre … It is crossed and informed by a number of other genres or types—melodrama, film noir, the gothic or horror film—and finds its point of unification ultimately in the fact of its address."[221] So why have so many studies, including Doane's, been limited in their range of texts and genres?

My examination of Pavone's musical narratives inquires into how female narratives, specifically in the Italian postwar context, are present in genres outside of the melodrama, even in those that traditionally addressed male audiences. Concerning the "woman's film," Haskell states that "if woman hogs this [fictional] universe unrelentingly, it is perhaps her compensation for all the male-dominated universes from which she has been excluded: the gangster film, the Western, the war film, the policier, the rodeo film, the adventure film."[222] My positioning of *musicarelli* within this discourse illustrates how comedic musicals offer empowering female perspectives outside of melodrama, and how they produce female narratives that can address and even parody a male-dominated narrative. Furthermore, the films provide insight on an often overlooked audience of the woman's film because of their representation of girlhood and young

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[221] Mary Ann Doane, "The Woman's Film: Possession and Address", 283-298. In *Home is Where the Heart is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Films*, ed. Christine Gledhill (London: British Film Institute, 1987), 284.

[222] Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape*, 155.

adulthood, so it is my hope that this chapter beings to make space for teenagers and young women in discussions of female narratives.

### ***LITTLE RITA NEL WEST* (1967): GENDER ROLE REVERSAL AND PARODY OF A MALE-DOMINATED GENRE**

*Little Rita nel West* (with the English title, *Crazy Westerners*) parodied the male-centered spaghetti western films during their peak period of production (1964 - 1978).[223] Dialogue in *Little Rita* is dubbed in English, similar to spaghetti westerns, but with songs in Italian, and it appears that this was the same film version for both English and Italian audiences. The director, Ferdinando Baldi, worked on many popular genres such as the peplum and spaghetti western, so it is significant that a filmmaker prominent in male-targeted genres cast a twenty-two year old (through she looked years younger) in a western-themed film. Shortly after *Little Rita*'s release, Pavone then starred in what is possibly the only musical-war film of the postwar period, Steno's (Stefano Vanzina) *La feldmaresciall*a (*The Crazy Kids of the War* in English versions*)*. A particularly comic scene in *La feldamarascialla* showcases Pavone's queered persona; she cross-dresses and disguises herself as a Nazi, prompting a German woman to hit on her and exclaim ironically, "Mi piace molto sai? È come dire, così maschio. Io vado pazza per gli uomini piccolini!" (I like you a lot, you know? That is to say, you're so masculine. I go crazy for tiny men!"). The spaghetti western and war films are predominantly male-dominated

[223] Maggie Günsberg states that these years marked the "golden era" of the genre in *Italian Cinema: Gender and Genre*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 174.

genres with male heroes or anti-heroes that addressed male spectators of their time. While Steno's film is certainly worthy of a queer reading because of Pavone's cross-dressing and gender role reversal, I have chosen to focus on *Little Rita* because it is replete with self-reflexivity (or meta-cinematic elements) in addition to gender role reversals.

*Little Rita* critiques the western genre as an exclusively male-dominated universe through parody, both of the Italian and original American genre, by ridiculing violence and props associated with masculinity in western films. At the same time, the film disrupts conventions of the woman's film by overtly questioning the prominence of romantic desire in female narratives. Pavone plays the teenage gunslinger Rita, a role typically reserved for men in western films, and she is a stark contrast to the (spaghetti) western's traditional protagonist whose excessively masculine traits were influenced by Clint Eastwood.[224] The film's gender role reversals, parody of excessive masculinity, and theatricality creates a camp-like western in which gender performativity is put on display. While it parodies a male-dominated genre, features of the woman's film are also woven throughout the film, such as an empowering female perspective, personal triumph, and romance. *Little Rita*'s hybridity is thus discernable not only in its musical form, but in its mixing of features from both male and female narratives. Because of its parodying and blurring of the conventions of gender-targeted genres I argue that the film demonstrates a new form of female narrative that is not restricted to definitions of the woman's film, especially those of the postwar period.

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[224] Ibid., 174.

Like the *musicarello*, the spaghetti western was an americanized genre that according to Günsberg was already a parody of the American films. She explains that the spaghetti western parodied gender representation and stereotypes like its depiction of excessive masculinity through images of violence, props (guns, cigars, horses etc), and clothing.[225] Günsberg's observation is persuasive and well founded, but if the films were indeed parodies of certain types of masculinity, it is unclear if audiences of their time actually perceived the genre as such. She notes that the majority of viewership was male, and that there were rarely female figures with which a female viewer could identify; consequently, women only watched spaghetti westerns in theaters if they had a romantic plot, which was a rare occurrence.[226] Aware of these viewership trends, it is unclear whether men knowingly sought out films that parodied masculinity, for while it seems unlikely this motive should not be discounted. More pertinent to my discussion is how *Little Rita*, as a reference to the spaghetti western, is ultimately a parody of an already parodic genre. Whether or not the spaghetti westerns were ever perceived as parodies during their era, *Little Rita*'s commentary on gender representation was arguably more explicit because of its gender role reversals and overt theatricality.

I believe *Little Rita* uses violence and western props as comic spectacles as a commentary on the spaghetti western's excessive violence and costuming. Rita is a young gunslinger determined to help a group of Native Americans retrieve their stolen gold from the "white folk," traveling through western towns and saloons defeating

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[225] Ibid., 182.

[226] Ibid., 173, 176-177.

bounty hunters and robbers with the help of her German companion, Grawz (Lucio Dalla). The two eventually run into Black Star (Terence Hill), a lone cowboy who later falls in love with Rita prompting him to leave behind his immoral lifestyle of robbing and killing. Rita's close relationship with Native Americans and her condemnation and mockery of violence is a clear departure from previous westerns. For example, the first shootout of the film is immediately followed by the first musical number, in which Rita and Grawz sing about joining forces and travelling together. This song includes a repetitive scat riff that mimics gunshots while the two characters pretend to shoot each other as if it were child's game of play. This sequence is the first of many in which the film ridicules violence by associating it with theatricality and immaturity. Later on, Rita confronts one of the gold robbers, Ringo (Kirk Morris), at a saloon.[227] The two face each other from across the room, a set-up typical for western shootouts, and Rita demands he return the stolen goods. He exclaims the last time someone tried to take his gold "they left behind a widow," to which Rita proudly proclaims, "Well, I'm not married." After the two draw their guns level to their waists, Rita's and Ringo's first shots hit each other square on—bullet to bullet—followed by Rita's next shot which flies directly into Ringo's pistol barrel. The fight is comical because of its overt theatricality and lack of realism (it is impossible for even a skilled shooter to aim bullets so precisely from that particular stance). Through excess or exaggeration this sequence parodies the spaghetti western's focus on violence, a technique common in camp aesthetics, that is, rather than

[227] Ringo's character is likely a reference to the 1965 spaghetti western films, *A Pistol for Ringo* and *The Return of Ringo*)

including any acts of real violence (neither party is injured), the shootout instead calls attention to its artifice.

The two continue their showdown outside until Rita throws a grenade at Ringo and blows him up—however, it is important that this scene, as well as later scenes, only briefly and superficially show explosions without any realistic visuals, preventing any emotional impact on viewers. Dramatic background music accompanies Ringo's defeat and the mood abruptly switches as numerous male townsfolk run into the street cheering and singing to a ragtime melody. The men sing to Rita, asking her how she became so skilled, to which she sings/responds, "Son come voi, una ragazza uguale a tutti voi! Non c'è violenza dentro di me, il mio segreto si chiama yippee yay!" (I'm like you, a girl equal to all of you! There's no violence inside of me, my secret is called yippee yay!). The rest of her song proclaims that the world does not need violence, all it needs is "yippee yay," a term that signified joy or excitement for American cowboys. Rita explicitly states that she, as a girl, is equal to men, and because she stands against violence, a proclamation she makes throughout the film, her character always rationalizes her own violence by knowing that she is acting for the greater good. Rita may be hypocritical, but the film's avoidance of any violent imagery and its use of excess for comedic purposes and theatricality critiques the way in which spaghetti westerns (and likely American westerns as well) incorporated violence and guns as symbols of masculinity.

Another prop associated with masculinity that *Little Rita* uses for comedic effect are cowboy boots. Rita confronts Django in the deserted countryside after she has

eliminated Ringo, and the scene is appropriately framed with a song mimicking the original *Django* theme (Sergio Corbucci's film was released only one year prior). The lone drifter is the only character of the film who mistakes Rita for a boy. In response to one of her brazen and sarcastic remarks, he calls her a "funny kid," to which she responds she "ain't no kid," prompting Django to instead call her "mister" and "boy." Rita's response indicates that she is offended by Django's condescending tone about her age, but not by his mix-up of her gender. Rita slowly walks up to the drifter and the camera cuts from a close-up of her face to their feet. Two pairs of boots appear on screen, one tan and one black, representing good and evil, and as she proclaims, "I'm little Rita," she forcibly steps on his boot as if putting out a cigarette, followed by Django's reciprocation of this motion. The dramatic background music culminates as Rita kicks him in the leg, forcing Django to sit down in pain as Grawz falls into a fit of laughter. Throughout the film Grawz periodically laughs at Rita's sarcastic one-liners and refers to them as "frontier humor," a pointed commentary on the general lack of humor in western films. The choice of background music along with an alternation of close-ups mimics a (spaghetti) western shootout scene, but instead of ending with a gunshot or death, Rita wins with a childish tactic. This childish fight diminishes any association of cowboy boots with masculinity by showing how a petite teenager can use them to take down a burly man. It is also worth noting that *Django* was considered extremely violent at its release, so the simplicity of this fight scene also parodies the film that it references.

*Little Rita* also illustrates its hybridity and parodic intent through meta-references. One of the two most explicit references calls attention to American westerns, when just

before dying Django tells Rita he would like to die “American style” in which a character recounts his life story during his death scene. Rita explains, “jeez, Django, I don’t have time for this,” but she allows him to tell his story along with a western style music accompaniment. Instead of attending to the drifter’s story the camera cuts to Grawz, who has begun whistling along with the off-screen melody. Just like Grawz’s commentary on Rita’s frontier humor, his character is meta-cinematic by whistling to non-diegetic music. Grawz’s whistling is a reminder that the spaghetti western and musical films used music in similar ways, often as a way to dramatize or emphasize a character’s actions and sentiments. It is unsurprising that Baldi adapted the western into a *musicarello*, since one novelty of the Italian westerns was their use of music, especially that of world-renowned composer Ennio Morricone. Günsberg notes that rather than keeping music in the background like American westerns, the spaghetti western placed more emphasis on music by incorporating recurring musical motifs and “featuring an extensive musical score that led to the genre itself being described as operatic.”[228] Aside from the many musical numbers in *Little Rita*, this particular scene recalls the way in which non-diegetic music was also an important feature of spaghetti westerns.

Grawz meta-cinematic awareness is also significant because his character openly questions conventional female narratives. According to Doane, a principal characteristic of the woman’s film is its attention to female desire, and this is evidenced in the film by Rita’s romantic feelings for Black Star. However, Grawz’s narrative commentary

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[228] Günsberg, *Italian Cinema*, 175.

prompts female viewers to question whether Rita's desire for romance is authentic or a product of societal conventions. For example, Grawz comments on Rita's melancholy by suggesting she sing a ballad about her love, and explaining that this is what people typically do when they reflect on love. Rather than offering her realistic advice, Grawz's suggestion is a reminder of how characters in musicals can simply express their emotions through song. Later that night Rita dreams of marrying Black Star, a product of her desire and imagination; however, the dream sequence has no clear contextual framing and is unusually long and detailed, so until Rita awakes it is unclear to viewers whether it is a dream or reality. Despite Rita's desire for marriage and love, in the film's final scene she ultimately chooses independence—after returning the Indians' stolen goods she decides to leave the town and wander, "never to return," with only her horse at her side. Black Star discovers she has left without saying goodbye, and he swears to Grawz he will keep looking for her until he finds her. Even though Rita is the film's heroine, Black Star is still presented as a hero by retrieving the last of the stolen gold. Günsberg notes that in the spaghetti western "women are either the prize for the lone hero, or the male elite rejects community and female company."[229] However, Rita is not the hero's prize, and Black Star decides to search for her "even if it's the last thing" he does, ultimately giving up his loner status. Grawz then closes the film with a narration directed toward viewers: "And he followed her night after night, day after day… 'cause the movie is supposed to have a happy ending, or else the producer will lose all his money, 'cause no one will go

[229] Günsberg, *Italian Cinema*, 177.

to see it." Grawz sarcastically remarks that there must be a heteronormative happy ending to please the viewer or producer, but as Rita rides off into the night leaving Black Star behind, it is clear she has instead become the lone hero (a traditionally male figure) who rejects community and romance.

These closing sequences suggest that the film's romance serves as a commentary on the woman's film and its depiction of female desire. On one hand, the film might evoke questions about whether stereotypical cinematic representations of imagination and desire (daydreaming of marriage and singing love songs) are authentic for Rita's character, or if they are simply a construction of popular culture. On the other, if these desires are authentic, the film's ending is an example of how women may struggle with choosing romance over personal ambitions. If Doane believes the woman's love story shows female desire as "a state of expectation which is never fulfilled or is only fulfilled in the imagination," then *Little Rita* instead demonstrates how fulfillment is not dependent on a love story. [230] Rita's choice for independence is also evident during the earlier shootout scene in which she proudly proclaims she is unwed, a sentiment reflective of teenage girls' in the '60s. Lieta Harrison conducted a survey in '64-65 for Italian teenage girls living in the outskirts of metropolitan cities (Rome, Turin, Milan, and Palermo), finding that 62% of the participants were not interested in marriage at the moment, and 40% of those who were sexually active were not considering marriage with

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[230] Doane, *The Desire to Desire*, 107.

their current partner.[231] Rita appears to have represented young female viewers of the period seeking independence and empowerment, so it is unsurprising that the film also calls for new conventions of female narratives through its hybridity, parody, and gender role reversal.

## *Rita la zanzara* (1966) and *Non stuzzicate la zanzara* (1967): Female Masculinity and the Post-Modern Fairy Tale

Pavone's more famous *musicarelli*, the *zanzara* (mosquito) films, disrupt normative gendered behavior and depictions of femininity through the trope of impersonation or masquerade. My analysis of the first film, *La zanzara* (1966), continues my discussion of how Pavone's films highlight gender role reversals and how female desire and imagination is affected by societal standards. More specific to this film, I also examine how the film utilizes the trope of masquerade to emphasize femininity as performative. The majority of Pavone's impersonations and disguises comically parody and consequently challenge traditional or excessive femininity. Because these disguises and changes in her character's "identity" are always accompanied by musical performances, the film exposes the connection between acts of performance and identity as well as between artifice and reality, both of which are prominent camp themes. Furthermore, aside from sequences of impersonation Pavone's character in both *zanzara* films resists conventional femininity because of her tomboy behavior and female

[231] Arthur Warwick's *Introduction to The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c.1958-c.1974* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 386-388.

masculinity. Like *Little Rita,* the second *zanzara* film, *Non stuzzicate la zanzara* (1967), references and challenges another genre or narrative type, specifically that of the fairy tale, a set of tales with gender normative tropes usually targeted toward young female audiences. Pavone's performances in these two films challenge genres in which female figures have been restricted to specific roles and values in postwar Italian comedies and classic fairy tale narratives, a representation that offers a new form of empowering female narrative.

Wertmüller co-wrote and directed both screenplays under the name George H. Brown, an interesting decision since she did not use a pseudonym for her previous films or for her production of *Il giornalino di Gian Burrasca*. The purpose of this pseudonym is unclear, but it serves as a reminder that Wertmüller was the only female filmmaker that directed musical films; male directors dominated both the Italian and American film musical industry. In discussing how these films disrupted conventional female narratives it is worth noting that Wertmüller was known for her "highly ambivalent and paradoxical representation of women and femininity in popular cinema."[232] It is possible that working with Pavone (almost half of the singer's on-screen musical were directed by Wertmüller) offered the director an apt vehicle through which she could challenge normative representations of femininity.

Pavone's various types of performance in the *zanzara* films (musical performance, but also impersonation, cross-dressing, and masquerade) construct

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[232] Claudia Consolati, "Grotesque Bodies, Fragmented Selves: Lina Wertmüller's *Women in Love and Anarchy* (1973)," 33-52. In *Italian Women Filmmakers and the Gendered Screen*, ed. Cantini, Maristella (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 34.

representations of young women and girlhood that resist gender binaries, and her character's unruliness, tomboy behavior, and gender role reversals fluctuate between stereotypically feminine or masculine behaviors. Because the musical film is already performative by nature, it serves well for addressing notions of identity performance and expanding current discussions of gender representation in postwar Italian cinema. Judith Halberstam states that female masculinity is an essential, yet frequently overlooked, facet of gender identity. She maintains that representations of "the tomboy, the masculine woman, and the radicalized masculine subject" are subversive because they question and undermine normative gender behavior and imagery.[233] While Halberstam's discourse on female masculinity focuses primarily on its disruption of hegemonic masculinity, Todd W. Reeser explains that female masculinity affects processes of identification for both gender identities.[234] He explains that on one hand, non-male masculinity works to destabilize the "naturalness of the link between sex and gender, or between the male body and masculinity," and on the other, it may offer empowering images for women seeking space in traditionally male-dominated spheres.[235] Depictions of women gaining empowerment in the work force and public spheres were already present in Italian cinema prior to the *musicarello*, but the female protagonists exhibited markers of Italian female stars of the period, such as exoticism, emphasized physicality and curves, and their symbolization of nationhood. The *musicarello*'s departure from these

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[233] Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 41.

[234] Todd W. Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

[235] Ibid., 214-215.

characteristics, as exemplified by Pavone's frequent use of impersonation and resistance of gender stereotypes, produced narratives in which gender performance is both natural and empowering. Additionally, by bringing performativity (via alternative depictions of femininity), spectacle, and exaggeration (impersonation/masquerade) to the fore, the *musicarello*'s camp undertones may have provided cracks in its heteronormative romantic narratives in which viewers could rethink the assumed connection between body and gender identity.

In *La zanzara*, both protagonists use disguises to alter their identities or personae while they perform on stage, suggesting that music is a particularly apt space for performing different versions of the self. Simon Frith explains that experiencing popular music, for both artists and listeners alike, reflects how identities are always fluctuating (he uses the terms "mobile" identity and the "self-in-process") because it provides an arena for self-expression and collectivity.[236] For example, the two characters, Rita (Pavone) and Paolo (Giancarlo Giannini), choose to perform in British beat fashion and wigs, allowing them to feel comfortable expressing different facets of their personalities on-stage. Wertmüller also worked with Giannini in many of her films, but the *zanzara* films appear to be the beginning of this affiliation. Paolo's character is often comically feminized when compared to Rita's unruly and brass personality, so it is possible that Wertmüller continued to work with the actor because, like Pavone, he was particularly adept at challenging normative gender behavior through his performances. When Rita is

[236] Simon Frith, "Music and Identity," 108-127. In *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. Stuart Hall, Paul du Gay (London: Sage Publications Inc., 1996), 109-110.

not on stage performing as a beat singer, she daydreams about impersonating female stars known for their conventional beauty to critique the excessive femininity of postwar female stardom, especially concerning its affects on young female viewers. Both Rita's stage disguises and impersonations are forms of masquerade that emphasize performative gender, and it is an especially effective comedic device because of its parodic potential. Robertson explains that masquerade (whether as opposite or same-sex impersonation) discloses "gendering as enactment and acting-out," which encourages an understanding of gender impersonation as less of an imitation of gender than as a parody of the notion itself; in other words, that there is no "essential" gender identity that "exists prior to the image."[237] The scholar expands Doane's discourse about masquerade as "double mimesis" by arguing that an intentional impersonation of another identity creates a "discrepancy between gesture and 'essence'" that "makes the 'natural' 'unnatural.'"[238] My review of musical performance and character behavior in *La zanzara*, specifically of Rita's cross-dressing, musical impersonations, and unruly tomboy demeanor, offers a queer reading of her narrative in which gender performativity is a process of self-discovery, much like music's function according to Frith.

Pavone stars as the tomboy Rita Santangelo—an ironic name given her devilish behavior—who is in love with her timid and klutzy music professor, Paolo, at a female boarding school. The teenager is immediately introduced as a troublemaker during the first scene when Rita wanders the schoolyard singing "La zanzara," a song in which she

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[237] Robertson, "What Makes the Feminist Camp?" 266-281.

[238] Ibid.

describes herself as mosquito, annoying and tormenting others. This opening shot shows Rita dumping sand on Paolo who she mistook for another professor. Paolo reprimands her, causing Rita to take offense to him calling her "moccioso" (a snotty kid or punk), and thus prompting her to shoot spitwads that sting him like mosquito bites. In addition to Rita's desire to sing, the film's narrative events are largely based around Rita's antics and pranks toward authority figures or school employees. Her exceptional unruliness was atypical for female postwar film characters, and even within the *musicarelli* films.

Many of the female protagonists in the cycle disobey parents so that they may achieve the freedom necessary to pursue romance and personal ambitions, but Rita is characterized as unruly simply because it is a facet of her personality. Kathleen Rowe Karlyn examines the "unruly girl" with focus on her relationship (or absence there of) with her mother.[239] Rita's mother, while absent in *La zanzara*, is not "demonized, or forced to disappear" as Karlyn describes, since in the second film Rita and her mother establish a supportive relationship in which they encourage each others' empowerment and agency.[240] According to Karlyn, the unruly girl rebels against parental and societal constraints and regulations in a similar way in which the "unruly woman" demonstrates "female unruliness as a cluster of attributes that challenge patriarchal power by defying norms of femininity intended to keep a woman in her place."[241] I do not believe Karlyn's

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[239] Kathleen Rowe Karlyn, *Unruly Girls, Unrepentant Mothers: Redefining Feminism on Screen*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011).

[240] Ibid., 9.

[241] Ibid., 10.

two studies intend to separate a girl's rebellion from that of a woman, but rather to demonstrate how unruliness is a common characteristic for women of all ages seeking agency in a repressive environment. This shared desire is particularly useful in understanding how Pavone's films, while representing girlhood, project narratives of female desire and emancipation that can address multiple generations. While her schoolgirl pranks do not immediately appear to challenge patriarchal structures or traditional femininity, they represent one form of emancipation that was accessible to her as a girl/adolescent in an institutional setting. Rita's unruliness therefore functions alongside her gender performativity to upset traditional power structures and gender representation by allotting her a particular form of agency.

Many of Rita's pranks give her agency and a sense of freedom by gaining power over authoritative, and usually male, figures. Following the opening sequence there are a series of scenes in which Rita and her schoolmates make spectacles out of their school's male workers, often by divesting them of their control of their bodies. For example, they sew Paolo's sleeves shut and glue him to his piano stool, leading to a hysterical scene in which the female students and administrators encircle and embarrass the Professor by pulling him off the chair and ripping the seat of his pants. The students' continuous pranks seem to fatigue Paolo, who is often in a bad mood and angered around the girls. In addition to reversing the power dynamics of the student-teacher relationship, they have also reversed the male gaze by making Paolo a constant object of entertainment. Rita further flips the power dynamic between student and teacher by searching Paolo's personal belongings. She decides to spy on the professor since the students are curious

where he goes every night; she breaks into Paolo's room, opens his locked chest, and sneaks out afterhours to follow him. Her snooping is especially violating because she discovers Paolo's wig to his stage outfit and exposes a part of his persona that he has deliberately chosen to keep hidden at work. After discovering the wig along with a photo of Paolo wearing it, she decides to follow him after hours out of curiosity. Her and some schoolmates ambush one of the male attendants by beating him, tying him in a burlap bag, and forcing him to give Rita his clothes so that she can sneak out of the school disguised as a boy.

Rita's behaviors reverse the male gaze as well as the authoritative power of educational institutions, especially for boarding school in which there is often constant supervision. Like Italian schoolgirl comedies of the fascist era, Rita's and her classmates' "untraditional behavior," such as rebellion and inventiveness, resists the "commodification of the female body" by shifting any spectacularization onto the male body.[242] Günsberg explains that 1960s Italian comedies responded to the economic and consumer environment of the economic boom by commodifying women's bodies through their sexuality, while male bodies were commodified by their labor or economic power.[243] Paolo and Rita are both performers, but *La zanzara* emphasizes male spectacle primarily in terms of physical comedy and the loss of power at his place of employment. The film's redistribution of power between male and female characters also recalls the

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[242] Jacqueline Reich, "Reading, Writing, and Rebellion: Collectivity, Specularity, and Sexuality in the Italian Schoolgirl Comedy, 1934-43" 220-252. In *Mothers of Invention: Women, Italian Fascism, and Culture*, ed. Robin Pickering-Iazzi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 221.

[243] Günsberg, *Italian Cinema*, 91.

emerging feminist movement in 1960s Italy by demonstrating how girls could find modes of empowerment and agency within institutional structures. Understood within its context, *La zanzara* is not only a female-centered comedy, an uncommon narrative in the '60s, it goes against the way in which comedies of its period commodified both female and male bodies. While the students resist being sexualized by reversing the male gaze and power dynamics, Rita's depiction of excessive femininity and her cross-dressing also challenge the trope through imitation and parody.

The majority of Rita's music numbers involve disguises and impersonation, many of which occur within daydreams or express female desire through imagination. Rita's imitations of conventionally feminine singers, both in her imagination and on-stage, contrast with her personality and her instances of cross-dressing. Much like in *Little Rita*, the tension between normative femininity and Rita's own alternative or fluctuating femininity recalls the conflict between what a woman wants and what she thinks she should desire according to societal standards. More recently, contemporary female comedians such as Amy Schumer and Rachel Bloom have shown how music is a powerful medium for this specific discourse. Bloom's TV series, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* is an especially good example because she satires current issues of feminism and female desire by using a musical format; the main character (played by Bloom) even proclaims at one point that she often "imagines" her "life is a series of musical numbers" because it offers her an easier way to express her feelings.[244] Likewise, all of Rita's impersonations

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[244] *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*. "Josh Has No Idea Where I Am!" Episode 15, Season 1. Directed by Steven Tsuchida. Written by Rachel Bloom & Aline Brosh McKenna. The CW, March, 21, 2016.

are directly tied to musical performance and stardom, many of which reflect the tension between society's standards of femininity and a fluctuating female subjectivity.

When Rita dresses as a boy to sneak out of her dormitory and spy on Paolo, her cross-dressing appears effortless and natural because her short hair and thin, childlike physique were already iconic features of her star persona. The teenager practices her male impression with her classmates by smoking a cigarette, truncating and slurring her speech, strutting with a hunch and wide-stance, and slapping her classmates on the rear. The screen then cuts to a nightclub where Rita encounters Paolo who is disguised in his longhaired wig and is performing with an English band, prompting her to escape into the dressing room and change into a long blonde wig and a mod sheath dress. Both Paolo and Rita transform themselves into yé-yé singers by donning blonde wigs and an English accent. She then performs a yé-yé song on-stage, after which Paolo is immediately infatuated with her, who, much like a modern day Cinderella, is a mysterious singer that disappears before he can introduce himself. *La zanzara*'s explicit reference to yé-yé singers is complicated, since as I discussed earlier many of the yé-yé girls were models of rebellion and sexual freedom. While Rita's character is obviously rebellious, her romantic narrative is at times childish and relatively tame; in fact, the only time in which she exhibits provocative behavior is during her impersonations of other female singers. Her temporary imitations of yé-yé artists are in indication of how performativity was embedded into 1960s entertainment and models of youth culture. It is worth noting that both Paolo and Rita both have at this point a "double," another identity they have constructed specifically for the stage and their image as a musician. The narrative and

cinematic device of the double, which I detailed in the previous chapter, is often used to suggest fragmented or plural identities and is a trope often associated with the affects of modernization. This particular doubling in *La zanzara*, dressed as British beat singers, recalls both the strong influence of overseas culture on youth entertainment as well how music as a space for the self-expression and the self in process.

The remainder of the plot stresses Rita's worry that Paolo is only in love with her overtly feminine yé-yé persona, and that he would not feel the same about her authentic self. Rita daydreams about imitating stars famous for their physicality—those who showcased their curvy physique in media, often through seductive and elegant body movements—assuming Paolo would prefer this type of femininity. She first sings "I Wanna Be Loved By You," impersonating Marilyn Monroe in Billy Wilder's *Some Like it Hot* (1959) wearing a similar sparkling form-fitted dress while lying on what appears to be a bed. As she stands, the musical sequence cuts to a medium close-up and focuses on the movement of her lips and coy mannerisms, mimicking Monroe's body language and framing in Wilder's musical film. The camera then cuts to an unnerving close-up of Paolo staring at Rita and smirking from amongst the audience, his face half-covered in a shadow and half lit by the room's red lighting. This choice of lighting makes it difficult to initially identify Paolo as the viewer, and it produces an ominous image of the male gaze in action. In another daydream Rita wears a simple black gown and performs Mina's "E se domani" (1964). She walks into a vast room filled only with Paolo playing a piano topped with candelabras, a setting and attire evocative of Mina's elegant and simplistic style. Rita overly gesticulates in a manner similar to Mina's trademark performance style

just as she has mimicked Monroe's body language. An interesting framing shot takes place in which Rita is looking at Paolo with the candelabra placed between the two. Gannini's hair, while not naturally red, has a red tint for both zanzara films, as if coordinated with Rita's own short red hair. The shot appears as if both actors are matching each other's movements, which, in addition to the dark lighting makes it appear as if Rita is performing in front of a mirror. The final daydream sequence occurs after Rita looks over Paolo's shoulder and catches him looking at images of the Rio Carnival, a festival in Rio de Janeiro featuring parades and masquerade balls. This scene prompts Rita to daydream that she is singing South American Carmen Miranda's "Chica Chica Boom," as originally performed in Irving Cumming's musical film, *That Night in Rio* (1941). Like her Monroe performance, Rita is wearing a glittering form-fitted gown (now in gold) that accentuates her small waist and creates the illusion of larger hips while imitating Miranda's samba dancing. Male backup dancers surround Rita and the scene cuts to another unsettling visualization of the male voyeur; another close up of Paolo's face in the crowd cast with an eerie green light as he smiles and whispers "divina, divina" (divine).

Wertmüller's framing of the Monroe and Miranda sequences are both imitations of scenes from American musical films in which there is a large audience that surrounds and gazes at shapely women, a possible reference to the early Hollywood star system as a product of the male gaze. Her imitation of Mina is far more emotional and intimate and it is the only sequence that positions Paolo as mirroring or as a companion of Rita rather than as a voyeur. It is worth noting that while Mina's fashion, voice, and gestures were

deemed traditionally feminine, her characters in *musicarelli* (namely, *Urlatori alla sbarra* [1960] and *Io bacio…tu baci* [1961]) were still unruly in their own ways, especially their search for liberation from traditional values. Rachel Haworth details the trajectory of Mina's stardom starting from the late '50s, noting that up until the last years of the '60s the singer's screen persona was determined by RAI's homogenizing values so that she represented respectability and domesticity for female viewers while also conforming to the male gaze.[245] Despite Mina's appearance and style of traditional femininity and elegance, her *musicarelli* supported female emancipation (freedom to work and sexual liberation) by resisting parental authority. Though the two stars adopted vastly different images of femininity, Pavone and Mina both embedded images of female agency into a male-dominated industry (both music and film).[246]

All of Rita's dreams highlight the imitated star's overtly feminine physique and elegance, but it is not until she impersonates Charlie Chaplin (his clothing, mustache, and mannerisms) for her schoolmates that Rita truly seems to be herself. Rita's masquerades—her daydreams and her yé-yé disguise—expose the liminal quality of youth identification and the self in process, revealing that gender performance is a natural mechanism, even if only in one's imagination. Her impersonations of female artists

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[245] Rachel Haworth, "Making a Star on the Small Screen: The Case of Mina and RAI," *Journal of Italian Cinema & Media Studies* 3: 1+2 (2015): 33-34.

[246] Morgan Blue explains that girls in particular use on-screen music performance as a means of overcoming and critiquing masculine culture and institutions, such as the music industry, because it offers them a new form of "voice". "Performing Pop Girlhood on the Disney Channel", 171-190. In *Voicing Girlhood in Popular Music: Performance, Authority, Authenticity*, ed. Allison Adrian, Jacqueline Warwick (New York: Routledge, 2016), 177, 180.

manifest through daydreams and musical performances, a metadiegetic and marginal/fantastical space in which a character expresses interiority or subjectivity—in this case Rita's fluctuating femininities and female masculinities. Fantasy and imagination are common components of musicals, and *La zanzara* demonstrates how musicals are particularly suitable for expressing female desire much like the woman's film.

While in the first film Rita uses her unruliness and impersonation to contemplate her femininity and circumvent an institution of patriarchy, in the sequel, *Non stuzzicate la zanzara*, she uses her unruliness to express and share her emancipation with her mother under the roof of her strict father. The sequel offers a narrative of female empowerment through gender role reversals, the modification of fairy tale tropes, and a supportive mother-daughter relationship. An emphasis on Rita's tomboy behavior and female masculinity is further accentuated in the sequel by contrasting her character with Paolo's feminization, often manifest through comedic gender role reversals. The film begins shortly after the events in *La zanzara* that concluded with Rita successfully performing Paolo's song in a music competition. The couple now collaborates in the music industry, with Paolo writing music and Rita performing it. The sequel leaves behind the school setting and focuses on Rita's stay with her parents (Romolo Valli and Giulietta Masina) and strict aunts who all reside in a castle (a military fortress) in Switzerland. This setting and narrative are reminiscent of a traditional fairy tale in which a daughter seeks freedom from a controlling guardian or witch. In many famous fairy tales the cruel governing adult is a woman (Snow White, Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, etc.), but the musical creates

a gender reversal in which Rita's mother helps free her daughter from the father's constraints. Another reversal in the film occurs with its parody of the savior prince or knight by comically highlighting Paolo's ineptitude and focusing on how Rita and her mother's instead support and help each other.

The altering of fairy tale tropes in the *musicarello* is an astute choice since scholars have pointed out that contemporary fairy tales are also hybrid in nature. Cristina Bacchilega posits that fairy tales are a "borderline" or "transitional" genre because of the way in which they change over time and within different mediums.[247] She explains that the malleability of fairy tales, as "material pliable to political, erotic, or narrative manipulation," often inspires authors seeking to alter well-known stories for their own purpose.[248] Contemporary texts that incorporate and alter tropes deconstruct certain values associated with traditional tales to create a postmodern fairy tale. Cathy Lynn Preston also discusses postmodern fairy tales in terms of blurred genres, narratives, and gender representation. Even if the tales do not always challenge gender depictions, she argues that the genre's imaginative nature and blurring of authenticity and reality/fiction create a liminal space that shed light on the story's artifice.[249] According to Preston, one can find elements of postmodern fairy tales in a multitude of texts to various degrees

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[247] Cristina Bacchilega, *Postmodern Fairy Tales: Gender and Narrative Strategies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 4.

[248] Ibid.

[249] Cathy Lynn Preston, "Disrupting the Boundaries of Genre and Gender: Postmodernism and the Fairy Tale", 197-212. In *Fairy Tales and Feminism: New Approaches*, ed. Donald Haase (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), 206, 211.

since contemporary usage of fairy tale imagery "exists in fragments (princess, frog, slipper, commodity relations in a marriage market) in the nebulous realm that we might most simply identify as cultural knowledge."[250] In other words, plots, imagery, and tropes of classic fairy tales are now pervasive in contemporary narratives and culture because they have become common knowledge. Both Preston and Bacchilega analyze such texts with an emphasis on gender representation, since "for girls and women, in particular, the fairy tale's magic has assumed the contradictory form of being both a spiritual enclave supported by old wives' wisdom and an exquisitely glittery feminine kingdom."[251] An understanding of how contemporary, postmodern fairy tales can be adapted for social and gender commentary is especially relevant to studies of musical films when considering that the two narrative forms share characteristics of artifice, liminality, and hybridity. Like the fairy tale, musicals are a form that calls attention to theatrically and performance (or artifice) while still feeling authentic through relatable characters and themes, as is the case for Pavone who, although she is a star, is still able to connect with viewers through her fluctuating gender performativity and depiction of the young self in process.

*Non stuzzicate* can be read as a postmodern fairy tale because of its use of gender reversals and its parodying of the knight-as-hero trope to illustrate the fight for (young) women's emancipation in a patriarchal society. The film opens with Paolo and Rita spending time in the countryside and discussing their future, where she expresses her desire to keep traveling the world together even though Paolo wants to marry. Because

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[250] Ibid., 210.

[251] Bacchilega, *Postmodern Fairy Tales*, 5.

this is a continuation of the previous film, which concluded with a kiss and the coupling of the protagonists, *Non stuzzicate* offers an alternate version of what follows the "happy ending" in which a fulfilling life does not depend upon marriage. Paolo contacts Rita's father without her knowledge, angering Rita who is forced to return home as a consequence. The bulk of the narrative focuses on Rita's interactions with her parents while Paolo, in his own set of narrative events, follows her by entering the castle pretending to be a Swiss soldier in training. On the first night, Paolo sneaks into Rita's quarters by climbing over a locked gate and up the growing vines that lead to her balcony dressed in white pajamas and the cape from his guard costume, a scene and attire evocative of a knight or prince. Paolo asks for her forgiveness, but Rita shuts the window in his face leaving him to beg behind closed blinds. Paolo later hides in a suit of armor in another attempt to apologize to Rita, but she instead laughs at and teases him. She recalls watching him earlier that morning training with the other guards and tells him his failed attempts on the field amused her. These scenes mock and highlight the absurdity of the typical romantic hero's actions, a savior figure that female characters often rely on in classic fairy tales.

Instead of being saved Rita chooses to stay at the castle for her mother, a woman who is lonely and bored living according to her husband's old-fashioned rules and stifling household. Rita's father and her aunts frequently chastise Maria Cristina (Masina) for her childlike behavior—playing with and feeding birds, and eating loudly at the dinner table—the reason for which her husband sent Rita to a boarding school in the first place, believing that Maria Cristina is unable to properly educate her daughter. However, Rita

and her mother become the true heroines/saviors of the story by helping each other express their individuality and freedom from male authority. While roaming the castle, Rita discovers her mother in her "secret room" painted entirely in purple and white stripes, a place Maria Cristina created for herself so that she could be free from her husband's constraints—Rita catches her mother smoking and reading a popular book series while surrounded by birds. She tells her daughter she wishes she could have more fun, so she asks Rita to teach her how to dance to "modern music" ("la musica di oggi"). A musical sequence begins in which Rita teaches her mother how to dance like yè-yè singers to the song "Fare lo shake" ("Do the Shake"). Rita and her mother dress in outfits matching the painted striped walls, inducing a fantastical and dream-like quality for the musical number. By the end of the film, Rita's free spirit and her confidence motivates Maria Cristina to stand up for herself by expressing her feelings to her husband. She tells him she feels suffocated, calling him "ridicolo e noioso" (ridiculous and boring), and proceeds to proudly show off her new dance moves.

Rita and Paolo later escape from the castle to sing at a nightclub and to plan their performance at a musical festival, but her father punishes her by putting her in "prigione" (prison), locking her up in a tower with only "pane duro" (old bread). Rita remains confident as usual and tells her father he will soon realize he is making a mistake. The following morning she escapes out the window by rope, a reversal of the fairy tale trope in which a male hero climbs up a tower (by rope or Rapunzel's hair) to save a damsel. Just as Rita frees her mother from a life of boredom, Maria Cristina's new sense of freedom and confidence prompts her to help Rita in a time of need. Maria Cristina meets

Rita at the alpine village Sestriere to see the festival performance only to find her daughter missing and kidnapped by her husband. Maria Cristina stalls for Rita by taking her place on stage, scatting to a ragtime song and dancing charleston. Wertmüller's casting of Masina is significant when considering that up until this film much of her acting career was for her husband's films (Federico Fellini), who has been noted for using female figures as objects of spectacle. Haskell argues that Masina was featured as "a lifeforce that happened to inhabit the body of a women" rather than as "a real woman," and whose characters "experience[d] an array of hallucinations straight from the lending library of Fellini's imagination."[252] For example, in *Giulietta deli spiriti* (1965) Teresa De Laurentis argues that Masina's semi-autobiographical character "lacks a positive self-image" because she resided in fictional worlds controlled by her husband's imagination.[253] However, these readings do not take into account how Masina may have embedded her own sense of female agency into representations of a woman tied to a man's world, a female rebellion and unruliness tied to the act of performing that is explicitly referenced Wertmüller's film. It is interesting to see the change in Masina's character when directed by a female filmmaker, especially a director known for her transgressive representation of women. Maria Cristina not only saves her daughter by preventing her from losing her spot on stage, which then leads to Rita joining a record

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[252] Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape*, 311-312.

[253] Teresa De Laurentis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), 102.

label, she has also taken control of her life and is more comfortable with her own performance—in this case, symbolized by her on-stage music number.

The role reversals in the *zanzara* sequel manipulate common fairy tale tropes and imagery, especially concerning the role of the male hero, the distressed female, and the evil female guardian. *Non stuzzicate* challenges classical fairy tales, which "by showcasing 'women' and making them disappear at the same time … transforms us/them into man-made constructs of 'Woman.'"[254] As Preston and Bacchilega have observed, there is a subversive potential to contemporary fairy tales that relies on its hybridity and liminality, and *Non stuzzicate* does exactly this, as both a musical film and a postmodern fairy tale.

## CONCLUSION: THE POST/NEO-FEMINIST GIRL AND ADDITIONS TO FEMINIST FILM SCHOLARSHIP

Pavone's fluctuating femininity and gender performativity, masquerade, impersonation, and gender role reversals in the *zanzara* films and *Little Rita* are unique to 1960s Italian cinema, and even within the *musicarelli* cycle. Although some female protagonists like Caselli and Mina occasionally challenged normative female behavior and roles in both private and public domains, Pavone is the only star in the cycle to openly cross-dress and who was famous for her tomboy mannerisms. Whether Pavone's performances are more connected to a tomboy or female masculine identity is dependent on different theories of gender or queer studies; nevertheless, she invokes a queer

[254] Bacchilega, *Postmodern Fairy Tales*, 9.

discourse by offering fluid gender performances alongside narratives that incorporate, alter, and parody conventional genres.

Furthermore, the films provide an overlooked segment of female narratives by representing girlhood and young adulthood. Pavone's characters are examples of how an unruly girl symbolizes issues relatable to all women, and how the young women of the '60s offered a form of femininity and female emancipation more relatable to youth audiences than the female figures of the 1940s-1950s Italian melodramas.[255] Current scholarship on representations of girlhood is often framed within discussions of postfeminism, a discourse that is usually associated with reactions to third wave feminism. However, Hilary Radner contends that the central characteristics of post-feminism—narratives that revolve around a working, ambitious woman that highlight fashion and consumer culture—first emerged in the 1960s, prompting her to rename the phenomenon as "neo-feminism."[256] The *musicarello* is indeed a product and representation of how youth gained status and agency through consumer and cultural choices (choosing specific fashion and entertainment) during the 1960s, and Pavone's films are an apt depiction of girlhood as a symbol of post/neo-feminist culture in which bodies and consumer power (choices in fashion and entertainment) are avenues for female empowerment. Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra describe the "postfeminist heroine as vital, youthful, and playful," the reason for which youth is an important

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[255] Karlyn, *Unruly Girls*,10.

[256] Hilary Radner, *Neo-Feminist Cinema: Girly Films, Chick Flicks and Consumer Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 3-4.

characteristic for the protagonist. However, depictions of girlhood extends beyond age, it is a symbol of "postfeminist culture as being for everyone" by depicting "fantasies of regeneration and transformation that also speak to the desire for change."[257] As a star that seemed to exist between girlhood and adulthood, Pavone's performances provide insight into how the young female *musicarelli* singers also displayed how female empowerment can be acquired through consumer choices in fashion and music.

So how might these films add to discussions of the postwar woman's film? I would argue that Pavone's performances prefigure current studies that have focused primarily on contemporary films (1990s and on), revealing how 1960s Italian youth media was not far behind today's female narratives such as the "chick flick." Roberta Garrett argues, "The most persistent feature of the new women's cycles is their self-conscious knowing tone and obsessive interest in past forms, genres and the prior gender roles carried with them."[258] John Stephens attributes a similar characteristic to the Teen Film, which he believes is often self-reflexive and fluid in terms of genre.[259] Youth targeted media and child/adolescent figures have gained little attention in Italian screen studies, but there is an important link between hybridity, and even postmodernity, and

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[257] Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra, *Interrogating Postfeminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 9, 22.

[258] Garret, *Postmodern Chick Flicks*, 14.

[259] John Stephens, "I'll Never be the same after that summer": From abjection to subjective agency in teen films", 123-138. In. *Youth Cultures: Texts, Images, and Identities*, ed. Kerry Mallan, and Sharyn Pearce (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 123.

youth representation in narratives that focus on an age that represents transition, possibility, and the self in process.

# Conclusion

It is my hope that this study has demonstrated the relevance of the *musicarello* in studies of Italian postwar popular cinema, as well as in scholarship on musical cinema at large. The musical cycle offers representations of music and film in an increasingly commercialized and intermedial entertainment industry, and it provides a resource through which film scholars and socio-cultural historians can examine how young Italians and youth culture were represented within this system, especially during a period in which youth held consumer power for the first time. Within this study I have centered my analyses around two major points of inquiry: how the films represent youth culture and entertainment as a product, participant, and reflection of postwar modernization and consumerism, and how the cycle offers empowering narratives for youth in which performance and music are avenues for independence, self-discovery, and self-expression. My readings of selected films have not only examined how the cycle represents youth and postwar processes of modernization (such as new entertainment and consumer goods), but how the cycle is a self-reflexive cinema that in turn accentuates its underlying notion of identity as performance in modern society. My analyses have demonstrated how the films depict characters that represent modern identity as fragmented, always in process, or constantly adapting, with an emphasis on fluctuating and non-normative gender roles and behavior—a visual depiction and dramatization of the self in process that is often best symbolized by figures of youth.

In Chapter Two I discussed the early *musicarelli* in relation to their socio-cultural context, and while it was not the main focus of my argument, it is worth remembering that the young fans and viewers of the cycle were coming-of-age in the years leading up to the 1968 revolts. The *urlatori* films prompt questions about what kind of youth counterculture was burgeoning in Italy during the economic boom, and how this culture might have been affected or strengthened by postwar entertainment and overseas influence. It is difficult to know how accurately the film narratives represented youth ideology without looking at first-hand accounts, but the *urlatori* films are an invaluable resource because they were closely involved in the initial dissemination of the new music, its stars, and its associated consumer goods. It is my hope that studies on the *musicarello*'s social and cultural impact will later evolve with the help of archival research and reception studies. Nonetheless, my analyses and socio-cultural framing of the films reveal the way in which popular entertainment represented or may have sought to address their youth audience, consequently providing insight into how youth were portrayed in mass media despite the economic focus of the commercial entertainment industry. The *musicarello* and their intermedial stars advance current understandings of the ways in which postwar entertainment industry adapted itself to the changing economic climate, and perhaps addressing young Italians that were beginning to gain social and consumer power was one such stage of this adaptation.

As I have argued, the early films reveal the contradiction between integrating within a commercial system of entertainment and the rebellious or anti-materialist attitudes of overseas rock'n'roll culture. It is tempting to think about Western

countercultural movements of the 1950s-60s in terms of anti-capitalism because the period's rapid expansion in consumer goods led to new lifestyles and social experiences. Many western youth countercultures from the '60s to the present period express(ed) values associated with anti-materialism, but any culture or sub-culture originating from a common taste in entertainment or music is still paradoxically linked to commodities and consumerism; for instance, I have shown how the *musicarelli* dramatize the contradictory and complex relationship between mass media and the audience it aims to represent. Within this perspective, it is more useful to consider the larger scope of countercultural ideologies in relation to the music culture promoted and depicted in the *musicarelli*. The term counterculture first appeared in 1968 in Theodore Roszak's new article "Youth and the Great Refusal," in which he states that countercultures were the foundation of the New Left, "the effort to discover new types of community, new family patterns, new sexual mores, new kinds of livelihood, new aesthetic forms, new personal identities …."[260] My analyses of *musicarelli* have exhibited how the films represent these changing values and lifestyles in their representations of youth and gender. Rather than antagonizing consumerism and a growing culture of mass media, I believe the *musicarello* evidences how music, entertainment, and stardom are still instruments through which progressive ideas and values can be disseminated.

A recurring concern in this dissertation, most prominently in Chapters Three and Four, is how the films produce progressive or non-normative depictions of gender

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[260] Quoted in Warwick's *Introduction to The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c.1958-c.1974*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. 11.

appearances, roles, and behaviors. This exploration parallels my investigation of how the films created empowering narratives for viewers coming to age in a period of national change. There is a growing interest in investigating representations of children in Italian cinema, as attested by the recent publication *New Visions of the Child in Italian Cinema* (2014), a collection of essays that aims to broaden current studies of the cinematic child from neorealist to contemporary film.[261] However, insofar as the studies in this text focus primarily on younger children, I believe there is much more to be explored in regard to teenage and young adult experience on-screen, especially for films that specifically address a youth audience rather than simply using young characters for a secondary function in adult-centered narratives. Catherine O'Rawe, Danielle Hipkins, and Dana Renga have begun such work on adolescent representation in their analyses of Italian contemporary teen films, but I believe examining the *musicarello* is imperative for discussing teenage and young adult representation in the postwar period.[262]

By focusing on specific recurring tropes, narratives, and structural devices in the cycle, this study had limitations in terms of the range of primary texts I chose to include in my analyses. In future research I plan to further explore the intermedial nature of the

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[261] *New Visions of the Child in Italian Cinema*, ed. Danielle Hipkins and Roger Pitt (Bern: Peter Lang, 2014).

[262] Catherine O'Rawe, *Stars and Masculinities in Contemporary Italian Cinema* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), Danielle Hipkins, "Figlie di papà? Adolescent girls between the 'incest motif' and female friendship in contemporary Italian film comedy," *The Italianist*, vol. 35, no. 2 (2015): 1-25, and "The Showgirl Effect: Adolescent Girls and (Precarious) Technologies of Sexiness in Contemporary Italian Cinema," 21-33. In *International Cinema and the Girl Local Issues, Transnational Contexts*, ed. Handyside FJ, Taylor-Jones K, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), Dana Renga, "Italian Teen Film and the Female Auteur," 307-330. In *New Visions of the Child in Italian Cinema*, ed. Danielle Hipkins and Roger Pitt (Bern: Peter Lang, 2014).

stars and their musical screen performances. More specifically, examinations of the stars' representation of youth, gender, and consumerism would benefit from analyses of the stars' television appearances in talk shows, variety shows, singing competitions, and even in the *carosello* advertisements and music magazines like *Ciao Amici* and *Big*. Rachel Haworth has begun such investigation on Mina by analyzing how the singer's public persona changed throughout her career and within different forms of media, but there remain few studies on the other major *musicarello* singers.[263] Additionally, with around eighty films, the *musicarello* is a rather large cycle, and as I noted in Chapter One, musical films have many strains that are not always easy to categorize according to specific conventions. For this reason, further study is required to fully understand the depth of the cycle and its various groupings according to narrative and setting, such as the military musical, the beach musical, and the films that concluded the cycle starring Al Bano and Romina Power. In addition to *Little Rita nel West*, other *musicarelli* that parody or imitate other genres, such as the musical westerns *Per pugno di canzoni* (1966, José Luis Merino) and *Lola Colt – Faccia a faccia con El Diablo* (1967, Siro Marcelli), and the James Bond parody *008 Operazione Ritmo* (1965, Tullio Piacentini) may prove useful for studies on the parodic and satirical trend in postwar Italian comedy. There has also been no analysis of the cycle's representation of race or casting of non-white actors, a study that would augment current understandings of the cycle's representation of diversity.

[263] Rachel Haworth, "Making a Star on the Small Screen: The Case of Mina and RAI," *Journal of Italian Cinema & Media Studies* 3: 1+2 (2015).

Despite my study's current limitations, I have situated my analyses of selected films within broader investigations of musical cinema as complex and hybrid (detailed in Chapter One), and as a form that is frequently ideologically charged by representing social and cultural conflicts of its historical context and intended audience. Conversations about screen musicals are becoming increasingly pertinent to contemporary cultures because of the recent reemergence of U.S. musical movies and television programs. In considering the large degree of influence that American entertainment imports and trends have on other national entertainment industries, it is possible there will eventually be a surge of on-screen musicals in other countries due to an increased audience demand for the genre.

Television programming has ranged from stage adaptations (*Hairspray: Live* [2016] and *Grease: Live* [2016]), parodic or satirical comedies (*Galavant* [2015-2016] and *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* [2015—]) to backstage or self-reflexive narratives about the entertainment industry and an artist's struggle for success (*Empire* [2015—] and *Nashville* [2012-2017]). There has also been an influx of contemporary musical movies, some of which address or represent specific social or cultural groups or concerns. For example, the mockumentary *Popstar: Never Stop Never Stopping* (2016) parodies popular entertainment industry and stardom, questioning the originality and genuineness of popular musicians controlled by the demands of the commercial music industry; Disney's *Moana* (2016) incorporates a unique Polynesian representation and cultural history alongside its narrative of adolescent female leadership and empowerment; and *Straight Outta Compton* (2015) is a musical biopic that engages with race politics in its

dramatization of the rise of hip-hip in southern California. Finally, Damien Chazelle's overwhelmingly successful *La La Land* (2016) seems to address an audience demand for escapism, a desire especially relevant for a climate in which many communities, within and outside of the U.S., are experiencing an increase in political, social, and racial tensions. However, I would argue that the film simultaneously challenges the escapism of classic musicals by suggesting that artistic aspirations and conflict resolution do not always align or are harmonious, an underlying message that echoes my discussion of the Italian *urlatori* films. *La La Land* is an ode to classic Hollywood musicals, but through its revision and adaptation of classic musical conventions and themes—again, much like the Italian cycle—the film reminds audiences that perhaps bittersweet realism is a more productive form of entertainment for a changing society than idealistic narratives. In a similar manner, I have shown how the *musicarelli*'s self-reflexivity and complexity exposed cracks in escapist or conventional narratives through which it could perhaps respond to societal and cultural conflicts of its period, especially in its non-normative representations of gender and youth as performance. Supplementing my discussions about youth representation in Italian popular cinema, a subject that is critically understudied, my examination of Italian postwar music culture and the musical form offers a framework through which scholarship can analyze the use of music in contemporary film as an ideological vehicle and as a mode of encouraging active audience engagement during periods of national conflict.

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# Vita

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