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Beyond “Brutality”: Understanding the Italian *Filone*’s Violent Excesses

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Abstract

“Brutality” has long been held up by critics to be one of the defining features of the Italian *filoni*; a body of popular genre film cycles (peplum mythological epics, horror films, *giallo* thrillers, *poliziotteschi* crime dramas, westerns and others) released during a frenzied period of film production between the late 1950s and mid 1980s. A disproportionate emphasis on scenes of often extreme violence and spectacle can be traced across all of the cycles, resulting in a habitual “weakening” of narrative and disruption of the filmic continuities fundamental to mainstream cinema. This emphasis and the uneasy pleasures that it provides have led to a distinct ghettoisation of the *filoni* within English-language film criticism, with historical accounts of Italian cinema ignoring the films completely, dismissing them as “trash” or portraying them as parasitic counterfeits of “authentic” Hollywood genre films. Furthermore, such accounts typically fail to address the question of what it *is* that makes these films so violent, limiting their descriptions to blanket terms such as “brutal”, “exploitative” and “sadistic”, in the process reaffirming the idea that the *filoni* are simply not worthy of further study. As a result, the suggestion that the films could provide pleasures which are distinctly *different* from those established by mainstream cinema remains largely unaddressed.

This thesis seeks to reconcile the gap between my own personal engagement with the films and the lack of attention that has been devoted to them within critical Anglo-American discourses. Drawing on the “paracinematic” approach highlighted by Sconce (1995), I seek to demonstrate that it is precisely in the *filoni*’s often violent deviations from mainstream cinema’s established continuities where their most remarkable features lie, using Thompson’s (1986) concept of “cinematic excess” to illustrate the films’ overwhelming prioritisation of formal elements that *exceed* the limits of narrative motivation. Using narrative and close textual analysis of a representative body of *filoni* to identify patterns of violence, spectacle and excess across the films’ structures, I shall also illustrate the benefits of using film theories outwith their original context to shed light on non-mainstream films like the *filoni*, drawing in particular on the work of musical theorists Altman (1978) and Mellencamp (1977) to identify a “dual focus” in the films between scenes of narrative and more excessive violent “numbers”. Combining my analysis of specific *filoni* with an

examination of representative mainstream films and Anglo-American genre theory, I shall demonstrate that while the regulation of cinematic excess is vital to the narrative pleasures engendered by the latter (suspense, characterisation, drama), in the *filoni* such pleasures are typically debunked in favour of the more immediate pleasures and curiosities provoked by viewing (and listening to) spectacular and violent acts that threaten the continuities surrounding them. As my analysis chapters will indicate, the *filoni* are far more productively analysed using theories derived from early cinema: by drawing on Gunning's (1986) concept of cinematic "attractions" – non-narrative spectacles which exhibit a similar emphasis on the primacy of the image and the pleasures that it provides – I shall illustrate how a central viewing pleasure prioritised by the *filoni* arises from the frequent revelation of the filmic apparatus during scenes of spectacle and violence, where spatio-temporal continuities are frequently abandoned.

By going beyond the blanket generalisations of "brutality" that have resulted in the *filoni*'s habitual marginalisation within film studies, this thesis shall exemplify a long-overdue "closer" approach to the films that seeks to highlight their distinctive features, study their structures and investigate the specific (dis)continuities and (dis)pleasures that they provide, at the same time exploring the possibilities of exactly what is meant by "violence" in cinema.

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Introduction

0.1 Preamble

I can still remember with some vividness my introduction to the popular Italian film, experienced not as much as a slap to the face but as a splinter in the eye on an evening in 1996. The eye in question belonged to the character of Paola Menard (played by Olga Karlatos), who at that point was embroiled in a struggle with one of the eponymous monsters from horror film *Zombi 2 / Zombie Flesh Eaters* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1979). Having repelled her undead assailant by slamming a door against its putrefying hand, it seemed that all was well: the groaning of the zombie had ceased, the room was quiet and Menard had slumped against the door to recover from her ordeal. In an instant, however, this tranquillity was destroyed forever as the same decaying hand burst with a loud crash through the doorframe, grabbing her by the hair. Suddenly the film's soundtrack was full of dissonance as Menard's amplified screams were matched by the otherworldly (and disturbingly indifferent) rumble of a synth score: with slow, drawn-out gusto the zombie began to pull her face towards one of the jagged wooden splinters exposed by the broken door. As the film crosscut between side-on shots of Menard's eyeball approaching the splinter and shots of the splinter approaching the screen itself, I distinctly recall revelling in the spectacle that this scene offered, safe in the knowledge that – as in the Hollywood horror films I had grown up watching – the sheer repugnance of this ocular mutilation would be assuaged by the inevitable cutaway or dissolve.

But these preconceptions would be pulverised in the shots that followed. As Menard's screams grew even louder I saw the splinter actually begin to enter her eye, this ghastly violation being met not by a cut away but by a cut *in*, to an extreme close-up of the eye being skewered. As the splinter slowly penetrated, slid in and eventually *broke in two and tore the eye* – accompanied by a horrid squelch and loud crack on the soundtrack that I can still hear as I write this – it became immediately clear that there was to be no escape from this extreme act of violence; no filmic safety buffer to protect me from witnessing an event that in my experience only Luis Buñuel's *Un Chien Andalou* (France, 1929) had hitherto depicted.

I was disgusted. But at the same time I was also fascinated: in that one brief moment where the film committed itself to explicitly showing – rather than cutting away from – this most violent of acts, it seemed like a number of transgressions had taken place involving taste, cinematic conventions and, most strikingly, my own experience as a viewer. To me there seemed to be more at stake in this sequence than the mere depiction of a violent act against one of the characters in the diegesis: what was more profoundly disturbing was the idea that the film was intent on violating not only Menard’s eyes but *my own*; an idea reinforced by the inclusion of a recurring close-up of the splinter heading directly towards the camera. Confronted by such an unconventional and disturbing scene, for perhaps the first time in my film viewing experience I began to question the assumptions that I had previously held about cinema, violence and spectatorship.

With the memory of this experience still fresh in my mind, in the following weeks and months I sought to discover as much as I could about films like *Zombi 2*. That the fulfilment of this aim rested on making numerous trips to one of Glasgow’s less desirable areas may have driven others away, but so enthralled was I with the novelty of such viewing experiences that I refused to be deterred from the task in hand. The shop that I had been advised to visit by a friend bore the somewhat abstract moniker of “Collectavision”: a grimy-windowed East-end video store, jaundiced by nicotine and reeking of fried food yet tiled exclusively with a rich and diverse collection of rare VHS and Betamax videocassettes. And it was to this very store that a number of enthusiasts – and, reportedly, numerous high-ranking members of Strathclyde Police – would flock in droves for copies of their favourite rare films, each of them searching for videos that could not be found within the anodyne empire of Blockbuster and its numerous outlets across the city.

Collectavision’s true *raison d’être* did not lie within these rows of black gloss and washed-out 1980s video kitsch, though. The majority of dust-flecked video sleeves that I had looked at were seldom even taken off the shelves: far more important was the fact that they provided an acceptable and legal façade to the altogether more nefarious operation taking place behind the scenes, namely the selling of uncut “pirate” copies of uncertified and frequently banned foreign videos. That most of the films for sale in the back of the store were *Italian* in origin was instantly remarkable,

with the majority of these videos being clad in lurid photocopied covers; their sleeves festooned with blood-splattered pictures, vivid primary colours and aggressive titles such as *La belva col mitra / Beast With a Gun* (Italy, Sergio Grieco, 1977), *Django il bastardo / Django the Bastard* (Italy, Sergio Garrone, 1974), *Cannibal Holocaust* (Italy, Ruggero Deodato, 1980) and *L'ultima orgia del III Reich / The Gestapo's Last Orgy* (Italy, Cesare Canevari, 1977). All of these films, as I was later to find out, belonged to the vast corpus of films that the Italians refer to as the *filoni*:¹ cheaply-made and frequently exploitative cycles of “genre films” (such as western, horror, science-fiction, comedy, peplum, police and even softcore films) produced in their thousands during a period of intensive film production between the late 1950s and mid 1980s.

Extreme and spectacular violence, it seemed, was omnipresent in many of these *filoni*, regardless of the cycles to which they appeared to belong. Whereas the horror film is typically regarded as being the most violent and graphic of mainstream genres, the frequency with which its visual accoutrements were freely deployed across *non-horror filoni* was immediately striking. Men and women alike were recurrently shot, crucified, scalped, punched, chain-whipped, set alight, raped and slashed in a number of westerns, crime dramas, thrillers and science-fiction films, with many of these acts presented in a similarly drawn-out, graphic and gleefully spectacular manner to *Zombi 2*'s ocular mutilation scene. Furthermore, it soon became clear that these acts were often prioritised within the films to such an extent that they appeared to threaten the very *stability* of the narrative and filmic continuities surrounding them. To watch the average *filone* was to be confronted by a series of violent, spectacular and often narratively incoherent “numbers”, sandwiched like the song and dance sequences of the American musical between more banal dialogue and narrative scenes. Here, it seemed, was a body of films that configured scenes of violence, spectacle and narrative in a manner vastly different to the mainstream genre films of the time: the novel way in which this process positioned me as a viewer was a central impetus behind my continued trips to Collectavision and eventual discovery of scores of *filoni* on DVD. It soon became clear that I had not only stumbled upon a huge number of unusual, entertaining and often unsettling violent films, but also on a new mode of

¹ *Filoni* is the plural equivalent of the singular *filone*, both of which are used throughout the following chapters.

cinema that forced me – as an English-speaking Scotsman reared on the codes and conventions of American cinema – to question the different pleasures, conventions and modes of address that films existing outwith the mainstream could offer; a process that now finds its logical conclusion, almost ten years on, in this doctoral thesis.

0.2 Origins and Aims of the Study

Having begun an undergraduate degree in Film and Television Studies at the University of Glasgow around the same time as I was discovering and watching more films like *Zombi 2*, my interest in the *filone* and its position within wider critical discourses of cinema quickly began to develop. An obstacle to this research soon emerged, however, for I became increasingly aware of the critical void that seemed to exist around the films that I had grown so fond of watching. With the exception of critically-lauded *filoni* such as Sergio Leone's "Dollars Trilogy" and, to a lesser extent, the *giallo* thrillers of Dario Argento and Mario Bava, discussion of popular Italian cinema was limited to the comparative hyperbole and idolatry of the fan canon; typified by websites, fanzines and cult cinema conventions. These accounts typically placed an emphasis on the spectacular and violent aspects of the films, and as such were invaluable in directing me towards a number of unusual and more obscure *filoni* that I would not otherwise have sought out. However, the general absence of any serious analysis and engagement with critical debates in these fan discourses was notable, with few of them straying beyond base plot descriptions, trivia and habitually tongue-in-cheek appraisals of the *filone*'s gore-drenched special effects and violent set-pieces.

This realisation became even clearer when I turned my attention from fan-based to academic literature and a central obstacle emerged, namely the typical absence of the *filoni* from the numerous (and often supposedly "exhaustive") accounts of Italian national cinema. While chapters, sections and even volumes of these books were devoted to Italy's recognised contributions to European art cinema – chiefly neorealist, political and "arthouse" films – discussion of the *filone* was either avoided entirely or limited to one or two offhand paragraphs devoted to the "spaghetti"

western; a cycle of popular films whose glib and xenophobic title indicates the derision with which many of the *filoni* held in Anglo-American critical discourses.² The first few months of my doctoral research were spent flicking through the indices of scores of Italian cinema books, hunting for references to cycles as elusive as the *poliziotteschi* (police film), the horror film, or the *giallo*: even the word “popular” proved to be absent from many of these books, and when *filone*-related terms appeared they were characteristically confined to “Leone, Sergio”, “spaghetti western”, “Morricone, Ennio” and occasionally “Argento, Dario” or “Bava, Mario”.

This is not to say that discussion of popular film was entirely absent from these accounts: film traditions such as the *commedia all'italiana* and the family melodrama are represented and analysed in most critical overviews of Italian cinema. But in the shadows of these more reputable cycles lurked a far greater body of westerns, horror films, *gialli* and other *filoni* that prevailing critical commentaries either totally ignored or gave short shrift, typically portraying them as inferior counterfeits of Hollywood originals – that which Dyer and Vincendeau label “Hollywood in foreign dress” (1992, p.11). While the work of a fistful of writers such as Christopher Frayling and Dimitris Eleftheriotis (and more recently Mary Wood and Howard Hughes)³ seemed to point towards a re-evaluation of the Italian western at least, the scarcity of accounts like these only highlighted the paradox lying at the heart of English language criticism of Italian cinema: from the late 1950s until the late 1980s Italy had produced, co-produced and exported more films to the world market than any other country in Europe, at times eclipsing even Hollywood with its cinematic output (UNESCO 1978, pp.30-34), yet somehow its critical history in Anglo-American discourses has been filtered almost exclusively through the work of a minority of neorealist, political and art film directors.

There were a number of reasons I could discern for the comparative absence of these films from the histories of Italian cinema. Firstly, their evident fascination and engagement with American originals (westerns; zombie horrors; vigilante cop films;

² This point is also made by Eleftheriotis, who points out that the word “spaghetti” in this instance “not only connotes inferiority and foreignness but also contamination as a dangerous and degenerate impurity. In this way, merely as a generic classification, the Italian engagement with an American genre is precluded to be an inferior, impure and contaminating exercise” (2001, p.92).

³ See Wood (2005) and Hughes (2004).

slasher movies; spy films and even shark attack films) and the disingenuous way in which they were often marketed as being “American” jarred with the more respectable pantheon of “authentic” Italian films beloved of the historical accounts examined. As Hutchings notes of the Italian western, “The extent to which these ‘copies’ of US originals were inferior precisely because of their imitative nature has preoccupied critical writings on [the cycle]” (2003, p.129). Secondly, and most fundamental to my own work, their foregrounding of often extreme violence was evidently seen to be problematic and difficult to theorise. One central assumption ran throughout the few historical accounts that mentioned the films: the *filoni* did not only attempt to copy American genre films, but copied them and then made them more “brutal”, more “extreme” and more “sadistic”, and as such were unworthy of discussion outwith these blanket terms. It was seemingly enough for authors to mention the brutal, extreme and sadistic nature of *filone* violence without giving thought to exactly what it *was* about the films that made them so violent, not to mention the distinctive pleasures that my initial experience of viewing *Zombi 2* had provoked. This proved to be a significant catalyst for the chapters that follow, for the more I became aware of the ghettoisation of these violent films, the more it became clear to me that some form of academic intervention was required to shed light on what the *filone* actually *did* – rather than what it attempted to “counterfeit” – and in the process go *beyond* superficial generalisations like “brutality”; a task reflected in the title of my thesis.

As a result, a central means of achieving this goal has been to investigate and engage with theoretical debates existing *outside* the realms of Italian national cinema. One key influence shaping my overall approach to the films has been the work of cult cinema theorists such as Sconce (1995) and Hawkins (2000): the former’s discussion of what he labels “paracinema” (1995, p.372) provides a particularly useful means of approaching the *filone* and theorising the specific (and often awkward) pleasures that it evokes. For Sconce, paracinema describes a wide body of “low art” films whose seemingly unproblematic juxtaposition with art cinema films in the mail order catalogues of horror fanzines (and, since the article was first published, on horror websites) illustrates the extent to which, as Hawkins notes, “high culture trades on the same images, tropes and themes that characterise low culture” (2000, p.3). Although

Sconce is fully aware of the elasticity of the term, he draws out his definition of paracinema with reference to:

[...] “bad film”, splatterpunk, “mondo” films, sword and sandal epics, Elvis flicks, government hygiene films, Japanese monster movies, beach-party musicals, and just about every other historical manifestation of exploitation cinema from juvenile delinquency documentaries to soft-core pornography.

(1995, p.372)

With these comments in mind, it is not hard to draw parallels between the films Sconce describes and the films that I am discussing: the production values, dubbing and plots of the *filoni* were often “bad” and, as Chapter One shall demonstrate, the ways in which they were produced and marketed (both in Italy and overseas) were habitually exploitative. Furthermore, motifs of graphic violence and sex that are often the stock-in-trade of exploitation cinema can also be traced across notable “high art” films like *Un Chien Andalou* and – pertinently – *Roma, città aperta / Rome, Open City* (Italy, Roberto Rossellini, 1945) and *Salò, o le 120 giornate di Sodoma / Salo* (Italy, Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1975); illustrating the frequent blurring of boundaries between high and low art. More interesting than Sconce’s use of the term as a loose generic classification, however, is his assertion that paracinema is primarily a *viewing strategy*; “less a distinct group of films than a particular reading protocol, a counter-aesthetic turned subcultural sensibility devoted to all manner of cultural detritus” (1995, p.372). Paracinema is therefore not so much a distinct body of films as it is an approach to cinema; one that valorises films like the *filoni* by pitting them against the more “cultured” high art films beloved of the academy, in the process provocatively illustrating that the boundaries between the two are not as clearly defined as the dominant taste culture would like to believe. As Sconce summarises:

By concentrating on a film’s formal bizarreness and stylish eccentricity, the paracinematic audience, much like the viewer attuned to the innovations of Godard or capable of attending to the patterns of parametric narration described by Bordwell, foregrounds structures of cinematic discourse and artifice so that the material identity of the film ceases to be a structure made invisible in service of the diegesis, but becomes instead the primary focus of textual attention.

(1995, p.386)

This quote in particular provides a useful summary of the approach that I have taken to the films, for it is precisely their “stylish eccentricity” and “formal bizarreness” that I have always found – and continue to find – most fascinating. I have already suggested that a defining feature of the *filone* is the way in which its disproportionate emphasis on violence and spectacle often threatens narrative continuities, and it is here where paracinema’s emphasis on *excessive* elements resonates most strongly. Simply put, the *filoni* are often *too* stylised; *too* graphic; *too* violent; *too* artificially-dubbed and *too* fantastical for their “material identity” – the inherent artificiality and “constructedness” of the filmic medium – to do anything other than emerge and threaten the continuities and “invisibility” fundamental to narrative cinema; underlining Sconce’s assertion that “paracinema hinges on an aesthetic of excess” (1995, p.380). Of course, in the “common sense” notion of the term, the *filoni* are clearly “excessive”; their scenes of violence and spectacle, their soundtracks and even their promotional materials typically being more “hyperbolic” and “extreme” than those of the mainstream film. Of more interest here, however, is the specific concept of *cinematic* excess – formulated by Thompson (1986) – that Sconce’s arguments identify. “Excess” in this critical sense draws on the structuralist theories of Barthes (1977) to describe filmic elements that surpass the limits of narrative motivation, in the process drawing attention to the materiality of the film apparatus itself and creating meaning superfluous to the diegesis. When viewed from the standpoint of conventional narrative cinema, the emergence of such excess could be – and often has been – regarded as indicative of “bad” filmmaking: it is no coincidence that the *filoni* are recurrently referred to as “Euro-trash” due to their excessive tendencies (nor is it an accident that the paracinematic audience typically *reverses* this process by wearing terms like “trash” as a badge of honour indicative of a film’s quality). What the paracinematic aesthetic provides, however, is a way of going *beyond* this conventional standpoint to highlight excess – rather than narrative – as the central object of interest in cult cinema. Even in my early viewings of the *filoni* it was clear that to evaluate them based on their adherence to continuities of narrative, character and realism was to decidedly “miss the point” of the films: of far more interest are their many deviations from and conflicts with such continuities, for it is here where the majority of the *filone*’s pleasures evidently lie. As Sconce summarises:

The viewer is no longer caught in the bind of mistaking the causal structure of the narrative for some sort of inevitable, true or natural set of events which is beyond questioning or criticism...once narrative is recognised as arbitrary rather than logical, the viewer is free to ask why individual events within its structures are as they are. The viewer is no longer constrained by conventions of reading to find a meaning or theme within the work as the solution to a sort of puzzle which has a right answer.

(1995, p.391)

Sconce's paracinematic aesthetic has therefore influenced my own work in two central ways, the first being to present excess as a central tool for investigating and theorising the structure of the *filoni*. While my initial preoccupation in the early stages of the study process was solely with acts of violence in the films, I gradually became aware that extreme violence was but one manifestation of a wider tension between excess and narrative that could be traced across all of the *filoni* examined. As following chapters shall illustrate, excess provides an invaluable means of going beyond the blanket generalisations discussed to highlight exactly what the films *do* rather than what they do *not* do. This leads to the second discernible influence of paracinema on the thesis, namely my decision to achieve this by comparing and contrasting the *filone*'s characteristics with what writers like Sconce and Hawkins frequently label "mainstream" or "conventional" genres and films. Although I was not fully aware of it at the time, my early experience of viewing the *filoni* was particularly analogous to that of the typical paracinema fan: the act of buying illegal, low quality copies of the films from the back room of a seedy video store recalls Hawkins' references to the "black market" nature of paracinema and the sense of "exoticism" that the films present (2000, p.45) in contrast with their Hollywood counterparts. Even my preamble's earlier reference to Blockbuster Video's "anodyne empire" brings to mind Hawkins' assertion that "video chain stores such as Blockbuster [...] limit themselves to serving a mainstream audience" (2000, p.11); both references highlighting the key point that "paracinema fans, like the cineaste elite, explicitly situate themselves in opposition to Hollywood cinema" (Hawkins 2000, p.7).

Such an oppositional approach is not without limitations, of course: much of the work on mainstream film genres has laid emphasis on their changing and indefinite nature,⁴

⁴ Altman (1999), for example, provides a useful entry-point into pervading film genre arguments.

and notions of what constitutes the “mainstream” in Anglo-American film culture are not only subjective but have also changed considerably since the rise of the *filone* in the 1950s. Furthermore, although my own experience as what Hills (2002) labels a “scholar fan” has imbued this thesis with a distinctly paracinematic polemic, where the academic distance⁵ of my methodology is counterbalanced by a passionate belief that these marginal films are worthy of study, it is not my intention to attempt to champion them as “great films” or as self-consciously iconoclastic alternatives to Hollywood cinema. While my own approach to the *filoni* has undoubtedly been shaped by their position within fan and cult discourses, the central concern of this thesis is not to examine the reception, the ideology or the “quality” of the films, but rather to investigate the mechanics of the films themselves: how their narratives are structured, how their shot sequences unfold, how excess manifests itself across them and with what pleasures this provides the viewer. The most effective way of framing this, I believe, is to use terms such as “mainstream cinema” and “conventional cinema” in a consciously reductive manner to refer to practices popularised and standardised by classical and neo-classical Hollywood cinema. Bearing in mind the fact that the majority of prevailing Anglo-American theories of genre, violence and spectatorship have been derived from the study of films that are almost exclusively American or British in origin, it is necessary – if not unavoidable – to base an analysis of the *filoni* on such a comparison.

This work therefore seeks to reconcile the apparent gap between my own personal engagement with the *filone* and the general lack of engagement with the films within academic Anglo-American discourses. To achieve this, I wish to investigate the relationships formed between narrative, excess and violence in the *filone*, a process that can be most accurately summarised by the following research questions:

1. *How do excess and narrative interact in the films?*
2. *What patterns of violence and spectacle emerge across the films?*
3. *What is it about filone violence that makes it so “brutal”?*
4. *What are the central pleasures that the filone offers to the viewer?*

⁵ Of course, I am not trying to lay claim to writing with absolute “distance” about the films: such an approach seems completely untenable, particularly in light of Hills’ assertion that “academics are not resolutely rational, nor are fans resolutely immersed” (2002, p.31).

There are a number of additional key aims driving my approach to the *filone*, the first being quite simply to draw critical attention to a body of films that have typically not been discussed at length within academic discourses by proposing my own detailed generic model of them. A second and more specific aim is to draw on paracinema's counter-aesthetic and interrogate the appropriateness of using Anglo-American theoretical frameworks to examine the *filone*, using the limitations which arise to propose alternative models for making sense of the films. It is not my intention, of course, to simply "throw out" or invalidate these theories, but instead to take a similar approach to the work of theorists like Williams⁶ (1989) and illustrate the advantages of using aspects of Anglo-American film theories *outwith* the context within which they were formulated. Thirdly, I wish to contribute to debates on paracinema by illustrating how such an approach can be used to examine the structural tensions of the films and, crucially, identify (and investigate the spectatorial repercussions of) what is *specifically* "excessive" in cult films genres like the *filone*. Finally, I wish to make a contribution to debates on film violence by not only identifying the different "types" of violence in these films but also investigating what "film violence" really *is*, in the process illustrating a productive way of going beyond the "brutal" generalisations that are littered throughout academic literature on cinema.

0.3 Methodology

My central scope of study is the body of *filoni* produced during Italy's "golden age" of cinema, a period that loosely ranges from the prolific late 1950s and 1960s, through the 1970s – the point at which increasing investment in television, video and satellite technologies (as well as greater competition from America) began to adversely affect cinema returns and film production – and ends during the fallow period of the mid-to-late 1980s, whereupon the production of *filoni* had dried up to all but a trickle of films. The types of film to be examined (which, as Chapter One shall illustrate, are more effectively referred to as *filoni* or "film cycles" rather than traditional "genres") are the Italian western, the *poliziotteschi* crime drama, the *giallo* thriller, the horror film and the peplum "sword-and-sandal" epic. There are of course endless variations

⁶ All references to "Williams" in the thesis refer to the work of *Linda* Williams and not *Linda Ruth* Williams, whose forenames shall be included when I am discussing her work.

on these and other genre formulae, among them spy films, mafia films and *mondo* “shockumentary” films as well as comedies, melodramas and porn films,⁷ but these five cycles remain the most ubiquitous and enduring of the *filoni*; their popularity made apparent by a continuing presence in both Anglo-American and European home video, in cult film festival and in DVD / laserdisc markets over the years.

Furthermore, my focus on these particular cycles arises from the basic observation that Italy’s most widely-produced, exported and internationally successful popular films were united by a preoccupation with scenes of violence and spectacle: it is for this reason that traditionally “non-violent” popular film cycles such as the comedy and melodrama lie firmly outside my investigation of the *filone*.

Before going on to propose a structure for the following chapters I would like to provide a brief outline of how I collected my findings and reached the conclusions presented. A central tool for addressing my central research questions and scrutinising the structures of the films was close textual analysis, which proved particularly useful when it came to identifying what was specifically excessive or violent in the films: my first task was therefore to identify, obtain and then watch as many of the *filoni* on video and DVD as possible. The majority of the *filoni* in my collection have been sourced at various points – and predominantly in uncut form – from American and Italian websites; online contacts around the world; eBay; trips to Spain and Italy; cult film-loving friends and occasionally from the few specialist video stores in the UK that stocked them. This would have been a more difficult task to complete before the DVD “boom” of the 1990s, and while a number of the more obscure *filoni* are unavailable or have been lost forever, the growth of the cult film market in recent years has allowed me to obtain a broad range of films. In addition, wherever possible I have tried to locate and use Italian language versions of the films to be studied, although (as Chapter Six shall explain) the Italians’ unwavering reliance on post-production dubbing techniques means that there is little difference in the quality and “authenticity” of soundtrack between Italian and foreign-language versions of the same films.

⁷ In contrast to the gradual decline in *filone* production described, the Italian porn film seems in fact to have been increasing in production since the 1970s, with Mary Wood recently citing a claim that over a thousand of these films are now produced annually in Italy (2005, p.61).

Having eventually watched around one hundred and fifty of these films, the next issue to be considered was one of scope for, as I quickly became aware, the tendency of critics to examine Italian cinema in terms of its *auteurs* also extended to discussions surrounding the *filone*. There is a marked propensity across the literature written on the Italian horror, *giallo* and western cycles (the three most academically “rehabilitated” of the *filoni*) to focus on the work of individual directors: typically Sergio Leone and Sergio Corbucci for the western, Mario Bava for the horror film and Dario Argento for the *giallo*. This itself seems an unavoidable by-product of the paracinematic aesthetic for, as Sconce notes, the tendency of cult cinema fans to identify links between high art and low art cinemas often extends to an inscription of *auteur* theory on the latter.⁸ While such accounts provide valuable perspectives from which to examine these directors’ specific films, this approach presents limitations in the context of my own work, for studying an entire popular cinema solely through its stylistic “high points” will simply not produce an accurate set of general conclusions. With this in mind, when it came to choosing a core corpus of fifty representative *filoni*⁹ for close analysis, I endeavoured to incorporate a range of lesser-known films and directors in order to give breadth to the study. This does not mean that the work of the “*auteurs*” will be ignored, however: the immensely concentrated nature of the Italian film industry in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s – where a huge number of films were produced by a comparatively limited number of personnel – results in the same names cropping up across various cycles, and to avoid discussing them would be counter-productive. My central impetus in choosing the films was to examine a wide spectrum of *filoni* of varying budgets, qualities and cycles in order to form a representative body of films: as a final consideration, extra care was taken in selecting a core corpus of *filoni* that did not merely back up but often challenged and problematised the hypotheses formed on my initial viewings.

Once this core corpus of films had been selected, my next challenge was to study each film in depth and produce a detailed set of analysis notes. Typically I would watch a film once and take some notes on its more interesting aspects before re-watching it to make more detailed observations on its narrative and scenes of excess, violence and

⁸ Sconce identifies within cult cinema discourses “a pantheon that celebrates a certain stylistic unity and / or validates the diverse artistic visions of unheralded ‘auteurs’” (1995, p.382).

⁹ A full list of the fifty films analysed can be found in Appendix A.

spectacle and making shot-by-shot notes on key sequences. By far the most useful product of these sessions was the “taxonomy of violent and spectacular acts” that I compiled for each film. This involved noting down whenever a violent or spectacular act occurred, recording its timecode and marking on a loose scale of one to ten how elongated and “intense” I perceived each act to be within the film. Although by its very subjective nature this scale was of limited use in quantifying exactly *how* violent or spectacular an act was, it proved very useful when I began to examine how these acts were deployed within the narratives underpinning them and, equally, how the *emphasis* that the film placed on them changed as its narrative progressed. From this period of protracted analysis I was able to develop, rework and often throw out my original hypotheses. For example, an initial argument in early drafts was that the *filone* typically provides its viewer – as in *Zombi 2* – with the most explicit view of violence possible. As I began to examine a number of *filoni* that were less explicit, however, I realised that the films often frustrate their viewer by looking *away* from violence in scenes like this – an argument that then became central to my discussion of spectacle in later chapters. Special credit at this stage must be attributed to my two long-suffering academic supervisors, neither of whom had much experience of viewing the films (or, for that matter, particularly enjoyed repeatedly watching their violent scenes) and could therefore take a more objective stance on the films, frequently problematising the arguments that I was developing. Before long it became apparent that the literature and findings were beginning to speak to one another, and it is the task of the following six chapters to illustrate this, at the same time providing an entertaining reflection of the hugely enjoyable journey that the last few years have presented.

0.4 Thesis Structure

Unlike a majority of the *filoni* examined, the structure of my thesis is driven largely by the desire to present a coherent unfolding narrative across its six chapters. Chapter One shall therefore begin by introducing the films and offering a historical backdrop outlining the significant industrial and legislative conditions that gave rise to the Italian film industry’s most prolific period of production in the 1960s. This will provide a context for the *filone* within Italian film history, at the same time

introducing to the thesis the suggestion that the films' emphasis on excess arose largely from an industry that was at the time characterised by excess itself (in the commonsense notion of the term). I shall present an overview of the different cycles examined, identifying their distinctive features and outlining some of the ways in which they were "sold" to their audiences, before investigating the censorial developments contributing to their specifically violent formal aspects and in the process further highlighting the idea that an awareness of factors *external* to the films is vital in understanding how their form developed.

Where Chapter One's overview sought to distinguish between the cycles examined, Chapter Two's presentation of findings focuses on the more significant patterns of excess, violence and spectacle that bind the *filoni* together, posing the central question of "what is 'excessive' 'violent' and 'spectacular' about these films?". This chapter is primarily speculative in nature and works towards the formulation of a set of initial hypotheses about the *filone* that shall be interrogated by the close textual analyses of later chapters. In this chapter I shall introduce a number of films from the central corpus to be revisited across the chapters that follow: although the research process involved watching a large number of the films, referring throughout the thesis to a smaller and more specific body of *filoni* will allow for more detail to be wrought out of the analyses presented. Furthermore, by identifying specific scenes from some of the key films and recalling them across the thesis, I hope to provide a number of recurring points of reference rather than presenting examples from all fifty films.

One of the first observations prompted by my initial film viewings was the marked emphasis on human *suffering* that the *filoni* exhibit: using this to frame my discussion in the opening section of this chapter will allow me to identify patterns of violent acts in the films, as well as to illustrate how these acts are frequently rendered excessive by the films' mise-en-scène, editing and soundtracks. Harking back to my viewing of *Zombi 2*'s infamous scene, I will then highlight *ocular mutilation* as a key theme that can be traced across the cycles before expanding this to illustrate that a disproportionately common device used by the *filone* is in fact the extension of this "visual violence" to the *camera* itself; a key theme that shall be explored in Chapter Five. These specific observations on violence will be joined in the final section by a wider discussion of narrative and excess across the films: taking Sconce's lead by

highlighting the typically arbitrary nature of narrative in the *filone*, I shall investigate the ways in which a tension with excess is typically manifested in its structure, paving the way for the more detailed analyses to follow.

Before going on to do this, a level of theoretical ground-clearing is required to contextualise the work of the close analysis chapters. Chapter Three's key project is therefore to build on the thesis' paracinematic origins by investigating which theoretical frameworks are best suited to explaining and rationalising the *filone*'s "formal bizarreness" and "stylish eccentricity", as well as to pose the pertinent question of "what do 'excess' and 'violence' in cinema actually mean?". This chapter is therefore part literature review, part clarification of analysis terms, and introduces and evaluates the two theoretical models fundamental to addressing the research questions of the thesis. I have already identified Thompson's concept of cinematic excess as one of these models: at this point I also wish to pair it with Gunning's (1986) continuing work on the "attractions" offered by early cinema, for the typically non-narrative nature of these films can readily be analogised with the *filone*. Gunning's attractions – discrete spectacles presented by early films to their viewers – present a novel and productive way of theorising the ways in which cinematic excess is specifically made apparent between and within the *filone*'s individual shots, as well as foregrounding the role of the viewer and the distinct pleasures to be taken from these spectacles.

Having introduced these concepts, the second half of Chapter Three seeks to acknowledge the problems inherent in using such an ideologically-loaded and often imprecise term as "violence" as a term of analysis. By identifying the trends with which the term is frequently used (and misused) within prevailing critical perspectives on violence, I shall formulate a specific working definition for "film violence" that takes into consideration both the acts of violence that the films depict and the frequent violence inflicted by the *apparatus* in the *filone*'s numerous scenes of "camera violence". The final section of the chapter examines violence's comparatively small role in critical literature on popular cinema and highlights some of the issues that my own approach to violence seeks to redress. Drawing in particular on the work of Klevan (2000), I will illustrate a central trend in the writing on violence in mainstream film genres to avoid discussing *which* particular aspects of film form and

style are “violent”, clearing valuable ground for my own close textual analyses to follow.

Chapters Four to Six take a closer look at specific films from my corpus of study, addressing the ways in which narrative and excess interact across the *filone*'s narrative structure, within its individual scenes and on its frequently “violent” soundtracks. A significant feature of these chapters is the engagement with critical literature relevant to each chapter's scope of study: earlier drafts of the thesis were more conventional in their presentation of a single comprehensive literature review in Chapter Two, but this approach resulted in an overtly convoluted chapter that made the links between the debates examined and the *filoni* equally difficult to discern. To reiterate an earlier point, it is imperative that a real sense of the films and the theory “speaking” to each other is created across the thesis; dispersing the literature in this manner proved to be a far more effective means of developing my points.

Furthermore, that there is no review explicitly dedicated to academic literature written on the *filone* is a conscious decision on my part, for not only is there still a distinct lack of a coherent body of work on the films to evaluate but also – and more importantly – I wish to similarly disperse this literature and engage with it at the most relevant points throughout the thesis.

Moving on to the structure of the central analysis chapters, Chapter Four shall investigate the ways in which the tension between narrative and excess is made apparent in the *filoni*, as well as the subsequent effect on the continuities and viewing pleasures that narrative typically provides in mainstream cinema. As my use here of the term “mainstream” suggests, a central feature of this chapter is the paracinema-influenced engagement with Anglo-American genre and narrative theory in its opening section, which shall investigate the typical functions of violence in mainstream genres such as the western, gangster film and horror film. Although, as Chapter Three shall note, such accounts are often characterised by the vagueness with which they refer to violence, they nonetheless provide a useful model of its *narrative* function in the mainstream film, where violent acts are intrinsically linked to the equilibria and disequilibria of these film's plots: this again provides a useful point of contrast with the *filone*, where violent scenes and their excesses are far *less* integrated with the narratives underpinning them. By foregrounding some of the limitations of

using these theories to examine the *filone*, I shall take an approach similar to Williams' (1989) study of the porn film by adapting critical perspectives on the Hollywood musical – the excessive nature and narrative organisation of which can be readily and productively analogised with the *filone*.

The narrative structures of two films – *poliziotteschi* (police crime drama film) *Uomini si nasce poliziotti si muore / Live Like a Cop, Die Like a Man* (Italy, Ruggero Deodato, 1976) and *giallo* (murder mystery thriller) *Solamente Nero / The Blood Stained Shadow* (Italy, Antonio Bido, 1978) shall then be compared and contrasted in the central analysis section of this chapter. By proceeding through the films chronologically and observing the distinct patterns that emerge, I shall work towards my own narrative schema for the *filone* that draws primarily on the musical film theory of Altman (1978). Suggesting that the heterosexual romance forms the basis of the musical's narrative, Altman argues that its structure is typically built round the formal alternation between scenes that focus on the male lead and scenes focusing on his female counterpart. The musical therefore has what he labels a “dual focus” structure, and uses its spectacular song and dance “numbers” to comment on and reiterate the narrative (dis)equilibria between male and female leads. Transposing these arguments to my own study, I shall illustrate how Altman's dual focus model provides a valuable way of theorising the *filoni's own* tensions, which, unlike those of the musical, involve antagonisms in their *structures*, rather than between the characters and themes of their habitually arbitrary narratives. As the schemata presented at the end of the chapter shall illustrate, this model has two distinct uses: firstly, as a means of understanding the shifts between narrative and excess that most commonly take place in the *filone's* own violent “numbers” and, secondly, to highlight the distinctly non-narrative *pleasures* that excess evokes in the viewer.

It is not merely between scenes and across films that the *filone's* dual focus nature is made apparent, however, and a key aim of Chapter Five is to identify how narrative and excess interact on a shot-by-shot level within sequences. It is at this point where Gunning's arguments become most relevant, for scenes of violence in the *filone* typically present a number of attractions to the viewer, in the process disrupting temporal, spatial (and therefore narrative) continuities. This important point will be illustrated by the close analysis and comparison of western *filone* *Mannaja / A Man*

Called Blade (Italy, Sergio Martino, 1977) with mainstream western *Shane* (USA, George Stevens, 1952), a film whose emphasis on narrative and taut regulation of excess presents a useful comparison for its far less economical Italian counterpart. Space and time in *Shane* are set up, maintained and reiterated in a way that not only establishes a coherent narrative but effortlessly integrates it within the deeper ideological binaries cited by genre theorists like Kitses (1969) as fundamental to the western and other mainstream genres. In *Mannaja*, however, these continuities are frequently disrupted to provide spectacle and create attractions, and by comparing it to *Shane* I shall identify the distinct patterns that emerge on a shot-by-shot level across violent and spectacular scenes in the *filone*. Furthermore, by doing this in such detail I wish to provide a practical illustration of how the paracinematic setting up of oppositions with mainstream genres can be used to draw out a number of helpful findings from cult films like the *filoni*.

Bound up in Gunning's idea of the attraction is the emphasis on the *viewer* that its "cinematic gestures" create, and the second half of Chapter Five seeks to explicitly identify the ways in which the *filone* typically creates attractions and directly solicits the attention of its viewer. This notion of "direct address" can again be analogised with the work of cult film theorists like Sconce and Hawkins for, as the latter notes, a key aspect of the paracinematic aesthetic is the emphasis on images that are so "direct" as to render their metaphorical significance irrelevant to the viewer (2000, p.32). In order to advance this idea and shed more light on the films, I shall introduce another relevant strand of musical film theory: by drawing on the work of Mellencamp (1977) – who identifies patterns in the musical's numbers which create what she, using a term from Mulvey (1975), calls the "to-be-looked-at-ness" of the events depicted – I will bring into scrutiny the specific devices that the *filone* uses to create this "direct" effect in its own violent scenes. As my analysis of *Mannaja* shall illustrate, the *filoni* frequently foreground issues of spectatorship in their numbers by playing distinctive "games" with their viewers, where violent acts are frequently *not* shown but are nonetheless rendered "violent" by the attractions' manipulation of the cinematic apparatus. By investigating these games and the pleasures that they offer the viewer I also aim to demonstrate how violence in the films is intensified through combinations of mise-en-scène, editing and soundtrack, illustrating how the actual *form* of the films can also itself be "violent".

To conclude these analysis chapters, Chapter Six focuses on the *sonic* excesses that often create attractions and disrupt narrative continuities in the *filoni*. An aspect that immediately stands out from the *filone*'s soundtrack is its entirely "synthetic" nature, arising as a direct result of Italy's widespread post-production dubbing practices that continued into the late 1980s. This has, somewhat invariably, led to the films typically being criticised for their "bad" dubbing and "unrealistic" soundtracks, for the *filoni* are fundamentally built on a "mismatch" between sonic elements and the images over which they have been artificially dubbed. As this chapter shall illustrate, however, a more productive way of examining these discrepancies is to again illustrate the paracinematic approach by investigating how such mismatches create excess, how they disrupt narrative and, most importantly, what pleasures they can present to the viewer. The central aim of this chapter is therefore to develop this idea by investigating the different types of mismatch in the films and the ways in which they reinforce or challenge the dual focus nature of the *filone* that I have identified. As Chapter Five examined the ways in which spatial and temporal continuities were typically *disrupted* to create spectacle and attractions, Chapter Six looks at the ways in which such discontinuities are mirrored by the *filone*'s soundtrack, and sets out to identify the varying degrees of interaction between sound and image in the films and their resulting effect on narrative. In addition, illustrating how the *filone*'s soundtrack can not only intensify onscreen acts of violence but also *create* violence through what I shall call "sonic spectacle" will complement the more "visual" analyses of previous chapters, drawing the thesis' final line underneath the tensions between narrative and excess that became more and more sentient from my viewing of *Zombi 2* onwards.

Chapter One

Introducing the *Filone*: Industry, Cycles and Censorship

1.1 Introduction

While the neorealist films were grounded in conditions and times of a particular country, they spoke to diverse cultures because they struck a chord of human sensitivity. But so many of [the *filoni*] border on dehumanisation by brutalising sensitivity, often deflecting attention from reality. They count on developing audience response with synthetic, machine-made images. Their shallowness and cardboard characters are camouflaged with dazzling colours, wide screens, and directorial slickness. Of course, undistinguished pictures always have been made, but now the context in which they are produced and marketed is substantially different. Films of this genre are not a form of cultural exchange. In reality, they are anti-culture, the antithesis of human culture.

(Guback 1969, p.199)

Written during a period when the Italian *filoni* were enjoying more success domestically and internationally than ever before, Guback's account of the films, however hyperbolic, presents a useful starting-point for my own study. For one, emphasis is again laid on the "brutal" nature of the films; an accusation doubtlessly prompted by the prevalence of excessive violence and spectacle across them. But while this trend shall be elucidated and interrogated in the following analysis chapters, of more relevance at this early stage is the fact that Guback also lays particular emphasis on the influence that *industrial* factors external to the films – namely marketing and "machine-production" – had on creating these patterns across them. Films, of course, do not and cannot emerge from nowhere, and it is hard to believe that the country in which a film is produced can fail to leave at least some mark on the films that they generate. As such, Guback's idea of a purely "anti-cultural" cinema seems untenable, particularly when considering the fact that the Italian film industry, far more than that of any other Western country at the time, was founded upon the concentrated and frenetic production of a huge number of films by a comparatively tiny number of personnel. While critics such as Sorlin (1996), Eleftheriotis (2001)¹⁰ and others have sought to discern the influence of these factors

¹⁰ By far the most useful of these studies is that of Eleftheriotis, who amongst other things suggests that "The Italianness of the spaghettis does not reside in hidden national cultural references, plots, themes

on the national identity and “Italianness” of the films, my central concern here is not to investigate what makes these films culturally “Italian”, but rather *what it is that makes these films so spectacular and so violent*; examining their production context will provide some possible answers to this question.

The initial aims of this opening chapter are therefore twofold: firstly, to provide an introductory historical context to the analyses of subsequent chapters, and secondly to examine the influence that industrial, legislative and censorial factors external to the *filoni* had on their actual form and content. I am fully aware of the caution that must be taken when attempting to make generalisations about a body of films that numbers into the thousands and spans roughly three decades, and in doing so I do not wish to homogenise or create an inherently reductive image of the *filone*. Nevertheless, by taking this historical perspective on the films I shall illustrate how the industrial, legislative and economic conditions of the time presented an ideal “excessive” environment within which a large number of popular films sharing structural traits, visual themes and excessive violence could emerge.

Drawing on this historical investigation, a third aim that shall inform subsequent chapters is to formulate a productive term for grouping this highly diverse body of films together. One of the overarching feelings to come out of my own personal experience of viewing the *filoni* was a sense that their excesses of intertextuality and hybridity were so great as to render the use of the conventional term “genre” to describe the Italian westerns, horror films and other types of film examined somewhat unproductive. A more useful way of approaching the films would therefore be to identify hybridity and an emphasis on excessive violence as the key “generic traits” that bind the *filoni* together. As the following chapters shall illustrate, there are many more fundamental similarities between these films than there are differences; far more information can be gleaned from analysing them as a cohesive body of films than as disparate strands of Hollywood genre film “counterfeits”.

This first chapter thus sets itself along loosely chronological lines, beginning with a discussion of the Italian film industry *before* the “golden age” of film production in

and underlying value systems, but in the very ability of [the Italian western] to weaken (if not erase) the national as its referent” (2001, p.126).

the 1960s and 1970s. As I shall illustrate, it was during this period when the roots of Italian cinema's industrial and commercial expansion were effectively sown, with factors such as favourable legislation and taxation, industrial centralisation, economic growth and decreasing competition from Hollywood all playing their part in establishing Italy as one of the most prolific film producers in the Western world. Having discussed the factors that "gave rise" to the *filone* in this manner, the second section of this chapter then steps back from the historical timeline and focuses on the concept of "*filone*" itself, highlighting excesses of *genre* and hybridity as features common to the films and investigating the varying industrial factors that gave rise to this trend.

Shifting in emphasis from these industrial factors to a more thorough discussion of the films, the next section offers an introduction to and historical overview of the five major *filone* cycles to be discussed across the thesis. Although, as noted, one of the central propositions here is that the *filone* is more productively treated as a genre in its own right, this section of the chapter concentrates on the differences between the cycles and the ways in which they were marketed to different audiences. Covering the major visual obsessions and thematic preoccupations of each cycle will provide a precursor to Chapter Two of the study, which focuses on the *similarities* in structure, violence and spectacle that draw films from across these cycles together. Returning briefly to the chronology of the Italian film industry, this section concludes by charting the *filone*'s eventual decline in the 1980s and 1990s, a period where Italy's once-prolific popular film output steadily dwindled.

In conclusion to this chapter I shall then turn my attention to the specifically *violent* nature of many of the films, suggesting that censorial developments in Italy were also important in shaping the themes that my research has identified. By examining censorship in relation to the film industry I also wish to lay emphasis on the idea that the violent excesses of these films were incorporated and foregrounded as a means of product differentiation and profit maximisation within the fiercely competitive environment of the time. Focusing at such length on the various external industrial developments shaping the *filone* will provide a valuable backdrop for the closer analyses to follow, clearing the ground for a more protracted discussion of the films

themselves and their “dazzling colours”, their “slickness” and their “brutalising” effect on both the viewer and filmic continuities.

1.2 The Italian Film Industry: 1945-1962

Literally translated from the Italian as a “tradition”, the roots of the *filone* lie not in an aesthetic or historical but a socio-economic tradition that began to gain momentum in late 1940s Italy. Cinema had always played a central role in the everyday lives of Italians: in a country struggling to rebuild itself (both literally and economically) after the ravages of the Second World War, the burgeoning film industry offered great economic potential for film producers and distributors alike. One initial means of exploiting this was the film studios’ practice of attempting to determine exactly which *textual features* contributed to the commercial success of profitable films; a process that was facilitated by the retention and analysis of numerical box office records for each film released in Italy. The country was accordingly divided into twelve regional zones, within which film companies could assess the financial performance of past releases in order to tailor their future products to specific markets (Mary Wood 2005, p.10),¹¹ in the process making as many lire as possible and underlining the markedly strong influence that industrial factors external to the *filoni* had on their form.

It was not just producers who were keen to capitalise on the burgeoning demand for new films, however, and the Italian exhibition sector was soon categorised along similarly commercial lines, with cinemas being delineated as *prima visione* (first-run, city centre, usually chain, cinemas), *seconde visione* (smaller, suburban cinemas) and *terza visione* (small town and rural cinemas). Fragmenting and scrutinising the market in this way allowed entrepreneurial film companies to maximise their profits by identifying specific demographics for each type of *filone* and subsequently targeting them with a deluge of quickly-made and typically low cost “cash-ins”. Italian westerns and pepla, for example, were traditionally more popular in the *terza visione* cinemas of Italy’s largely rural South; the majority of these films were

¹¹ See Wood (2005) and Hughes (2004).
d (2005) in this chapter will refer to Mary Wood.

consequently pitched outside the *prima visione* circuit, which was typically dominated by “quality” films and box office successes.¹²

With these commercial mechanisms in place, the film industry and its profits would expand rapidly in the following decades. Also important in effecting this rise, however, was the dynamic and often fiercely competitive relationship with Hollywood’s cinematic exports that rekindled in the late 1940s. After a long period during which all American film imports had been banned by the Fascist government (and as a result no import quotas were in existence), the newly-liberated Italy was swamped by a torrent of Hollywood genre films that had accumulated during the war years.¹³ Presiding over a newly-founded “Republic of Italy” that was not only possessive of a rich cinematic culture but also a modernised industry that had been instilled with new vigour by the Fascists – who amongst other measures had financed the building of one of the world’s largest film studios, Cinecittà, in Rome – the new government quickly became aware of the commercial threat posed by Hollywood cinema and in 1945 formed ANICA (*Associazione Nazionale Industrie Cinematografiche e Audiovisive*), the National Association for the Cinema and Similar Industries. In the face of American dominance of the Italian box office, ANICA’s role was to encourage domestic film production and set up trade links with overseas markets. This development initially did little to stem the tide of Hollywood imports though, with only thirteen percent of box office receipts going to indigenous productions in 1946, a year when over six hundred films were imported from America (Wagstaff 1998, p.75; Guback 1969, p.24).

Such competition from American exports had always been a lurking threat to domestic film production in Italy. The industry had been making and exporting numerous comedies, pepla and melodramas since the 1910s and was strong enough at its peak in the 1920s to produce around two hundred films a year (Wood 2005, p.7), although the competition from Hollywood had eventually proved to be too fierce and led to the near-collapse of the Italian film industry after the First World War. As the

¹² During the western’s heyday of the mid-1960s, however, Wagstaff notes that a number of “spaghetis” were dominating the *prima visione* market and making a billion lire between them (1992, p.246).

¹³ Intriguingly, the reasons behind this were as political as they were commercial, for the calculated smothering of Italian productions was achieved under the auspices of the US Army’s Psychological Warfare Branch, an organisation keen to impose American capitalist ideologies, values and desires on a society where consumerism and leisure classes were slowly emerging (Wood 2005, p.12).

end of the 1940s approached, however, America's domination of Italian box offices was tempered by a gradual increase in domestic production, rising from sixty-two films in 1946 to ninety-two in 1950 (Nowell-Smith, Hay and Volpi 1996, p.159), largely as a result of the emergent neorealist film's success. Luchino Visconti's neorealist thriller *Ossessione / Obsession* (Italy, 1942) was met with international acclaim, paving the way for directors like Vittorio de Sica, Roberto Rossellini and Cesare Zavattini to produce a series of home-grown and low-budget alternatives to the glossy Hollywood genre films that were taking the majority of box office receipts. Yet while films such as *Roma, città aperta / Rome, Open City* (Italy, Roberto Rossellini, 1945) and *Ladri di biciclette / Bicycle Thieves* (Italy, Vittorio de Sica, 1948) were critically lauded both in and outside Italy, as Wagstaff notes, their relatively meagre domestic financial success did little to weaken Hollywood's grasp on the Italian public's voraciousness for the exotic American westerns, *films noir*, comedies and melodramas that they had been denied during the war years:

The problem with neorealist films was that they did not have the "entertainment" quality (known stars and conventional genre characteristics) to wrest the domestic market from American imports; they won prizes abroad, but Italians would not go to see them.

(1998, p.75)

The poor domestic performance of the neorealist film eventually led to its decline towards the end of the decade, a trend that was not helped by the Christian Democrat Party's rise to prominence in the hotly-contested elections of 1948.¹⁴ Disagreeing with the leftist ideologies and makeshift production values embodied by the neorealist films, and keen to compete economically with the American majors, the new government envisaged a more profitable, studio-driven and centralised mode of film production; by the end of the decade Cinecittà was established as the hub of Italian cinema, a position confirmed by MGM's decision to use the studio to film big-budget epics like *Quo Vadis* (USA, Mervyn Le Roy, 1952) and *Ben Hur* (USA, William Wyler, 1959).

¹⁴ Held on the 18th April 1948, the general election was only Italy's second democratic election in history: amid scenes of violence, fanaticism, threats and American-funded anti-Communist propaganda the Christian Democrats were elected to the *Assemblea Costituente*, beating the pro-Soviet FDP (Popular Democratic Front) by 48.5% to 31% of the vote (Einaudi 1948).

However unsuccessful the “high art” neorealist films were in Italy’s box offices, there indeed lies a certain irony in the fact that the neorealist films played a vital role in the development of a new *commercial* Italian cinema: it was their international success that helped to facilitate the export of “low art” *filoni* in the decades that followed. As Wagstaff notes, these “prestige” productions would often be used to open up specific markets abroad, garnering respect for Italian cinema and more importantly allowing a slew of popular genre films to follow in their wake (1998, p.75). *Roma, città aperta* in particular was instrumental in securing Italian entry into overseas territories: having been sold for twenty thousand dollars to an American importer, it was re-packaged with the (barely-achieved) promise of Mediterranean sauciness as its central selling point. The film quickly brought in over one and a half million dollars as a result (Nowell-Smith and Ricci 1998, p.76), the exploitative nature of its overseas marketing campaign epitomising the blurring of boundaries between high and low art identified by paracinema.

The arrival of the 1950s therefore signalled Italy’s tentative re-entry into a global film trade market¹⁵ as the domestic industry widened its economic base and redefined its power relationship with Hollywood. One means of achieving this was through the introduction of numerous government-led legislative initiatives such as the Andreotti Act of 1949,¹⁶ which placed a tax on film imports in order to provide capital for domestic production. While this act was not strictly a quota system and did little to formally restrict the flow of foreign films into the country, it ensured that any films which needed to be dubbed for Italian audiences (a majority, as subtitling was uncommon at the time) had to apply for a “dubbing certificate”. The money from these certificates was then used to create a pool of interest-free capital from which local producers could borrow to fund their films: in typically shrewd fashion the Italian government was also prepared to offer exemptions from the dubbing certificate in exchange for more export licences in countries like France who had their own import quotas in place (Guback 1969, p.24).

¹⁵ This move was also reflective of larger industrial moves taking place in post-war Italy: with massive help from the US the country was quickly recovering its position as a major player in global economics and trade. Over the following decade Italy would join NATO (1949), the European Coal and Steel Community (1951) and would finally enter the European Common Market in 1958. (Arcaini 2000)

¹⁶ Named after the long-running Minister of the Interior, Giulio Andreotti.

Italy subsequently introduced its own import quota system the same year, one which initially required that eighty days a year – twenty-two percent of screen time – were devoted to the exhibition of Italian films (Guback 1969, p.25). The profound effect that this had on the domestic film industry is clear from the fact that, between 1949 and 1952, American imports fell by forty-nine percent, while Italian productions increased by sixty-two percent (Nowell-Smith, Hay and Volpi 1996, p.159). Consequent increases in the severity of these restrictions ensured that the number of American imports was further reduced, and by 1960 Italy was importing one hundred and eighty-five Hollywood films a year, compared with four hundred a decade earlier; a decrease of fifty-four percent (Guback 1969, p.26). At the same time, those Hollywood films that *were* imported into the country had many of their profits blocked from leaving Italy, the result of numerous pacts made between ANICA and the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA). Under these agreements, much of the money that American studios made from Italian box offices had to be reinvested in domestic productions, ensuring that, even if Hollywood films were dominating the market, they were still working to expand the indigenous film industry (Nowell-Smith, Hay and Volpi 1996, p.139).

The 1950s can therefore be regarded as a key decade in the development of popular cinema in Italy, a period when the weakening of Hollywood's previously tight grasp on the market was matched by an increase in international export agreements and domestic film production. Eight hundred and forty-eight Italian films were sold to foreign markets in 1950: by 1960 this number had risen to three thousand six hundred and eighty-one (Nowell-Smith and Ricci 1998, p.77). By this point an economic, cultural and industrial infrastructure had been established offering seemingly limitless possibilities to investors, producers and directors prepared to take financial risks by releasing films. The economy was growing stronger and in the following thirty years the Italian GDP per head more than quadrupled, with the number of Italian white-collar workers doubling in the process. Employment was also at an all-time high, and industrial centres in the North were quickly expanding as rural Southern workers migrated to the cities of Rome, Milan and Turin: an emergent culture of middle-class consumption, mobility and disposable wealth was on the rise (Restivo 2002, p.45). Films could now be financed, produced and exported at low cost to a huge global market, often returning massive profits to their financiers. Besides this, the American

film industry was simultaneously going through one of its worst crises as its monolithic studio system disintegrated, resulting in a sharp decrease in film exports (Wood 2005, p.16). Between 1957 and 1966, in fact, America's production levels fell from three hundred and seventy-eight films a year to a record post-war low of one hundred and sixty-eight: over the same period Italy's film output rose from one hundred and twenty-nine to two hundred and forty-five films a year (UNESCO 1977, p.31). In summary, the economic and cultural conditions of the late 1950s presented an ideal environment for the Italian film industry to become a dominant force both domestically and worldwide.

Paradoxically, the central means of overcoming America's dominance of the box office was to provide Italian audiences with exactly what the Hollywood majors had been offering them for the last five decades: bigger budgets, entertainment, spectacle and big-name stars. The film industry's response to the latter challenge was to re-establish the pre-First World War star system of Italian *divismo*, and over the 1950s and 1960s a number of actors such as Marcello Mastroianni, Alberto Sordi, Totò, Claudia Cardinale and Sophia Loren rose to national prominence by appearing in several large-budget films and *filoni*. Such was the Italian public's demand for big-name actors and actresses, in fact, that Italy alone could not supply enough of them: the importing of American and European stars would become a defining feature of popular Italian cinema in the years to come, with actors like Clint Eastwood, Klaus Kinski, Steve Reeves, Lee Van Cleef and even Marlon Brando starring in Italian films. Wagstaff offers a neat summary of this process:

The Italian domestic public was wooed away from American films with a strategy of systematic exploitation of popular genres [...] a star system was created by recruiting young women from beauty contests. Effective dramatic Italian male leads were so scarce that post-war Italian cinema has been characterised by the use of American actors for those roles. Because of the recession in Hollywood and its policy of runaway production in Italy, these actors were available in Rome and reasonably cheap. Their use in Italian productions increased the exportability of those films.

(1998, p.76)

Remarkably, even the Italian film industry itself at the time seems to have been built on excess, with producers trying to outdo the American studios, outdo their genres

and their star system and, most importantly outdo *each other* in order to make as much capital as possible. Over the following decades many actors and actresses would become synonymous with specific film cycles: Rome-born Maurizio Merli, for example, became the most prominent of the 1970s *poliziotteschi*; Kinski and Van Cleef acted in numerous westerns; British actress Barbara Steele would become the iconic face of the gothic horror film, and each cycle would have its own company of bit-part and minor character actors whose faces recurrently cropped up in the films. In contrast to popular Hollywood films of the time, however, such industrial developments facilitated an environment where the *genre* of a particular film was no longer as important as its lead actor, its visual style, its soundtrack and the typically excessive way in which it was marketed. As Wagstaff notes, notions of quality in Italian cinema had undergone a vast paradigm shift since the neorealist successes of the 1940s, and by the 1960s it was clear that audiences were far less concerned with cultural quality than they were with the kind of “quality” presented by exotic and often violent spectacles (Wagstaff 1998, p.76). Besides, as the government’s increasingly generous tax rebates were now tied to box office earnings, producers had a clear incentive to make films which appealed to the large-scale Italian public, a process that would result in the production of thousands of *filoni* in the ensuing decades.

Nowell-Smith, Hay and Volpi identify 1960 as the *annus mirabilis* of Italian cinema, for in that year the domestic share of box office receipts reached fifty percent for the first time since the war, with numerous comedy, peplum and melodrama *filoni* being released across the country (1996, p.5). A central milestone in this same year was the critical and economic success – both domestically and internationally – of the “prestige” production *La dolce vita* (Italy, Federico Fellini, 1960), which paved the way for two major developments in the industry: firstly, the increase in production of arthouse films by directors like Fellini, Bertolucci and Wertmüller and the consequent establishing of a festival circuit and, secondly, the move towards more controversial and potentially explicit subject matter in popular Italian cinema. With the Italian government now steadily moving towards the centre-left, censorship became less stringent and the public’s interest in more risqué films could be addressed. It is no coincidence that many of the art films made during this period are open to paracinematic comparisons with the less respectable *filoni*, many of which trade in the

same visual referents. *La dolce vita*'s novel portrayal of a society characterised by sexual orgies, alcohol binges and suicide can, for example, be paralleled with the thematic concerns of one of Italy's first proper horror *filoni* – *La maschera del demonio* / *Black Sunday* (Italy, Mario Bava, 1960) – which was released in the same year and articulated similarly controversial themes of violence, the occult, lesbianism, torture, necrophilia and incest. That the release of these films was accompanied by the rise of the self-explanatory *film sexy* is perhaps no surprise: Italian films had been marketed abroad for years on their supposed raciness, and the softcore porn film would go on to become an immensely profitable export *filone* (Wood 2005, p.22). The conditions were perfect, it seemed, for popular Italian cinema to not only dominate the domestic box office but to further infiltrate the export market by engaging with and portraying social taboos that Hollywood did not – and could not – offer Italian audiences.¹⁷

By 1962 the strength of the domestic film industry was such that Italy had abolished import restrictions completely: in the three preceding years only four hundred and seventy-seven Hollywood films had been shown in the country, compared with over six hundred Italian films (Guback 1969, p.40). Although some of the Hollywood majors subsequently pulled out of the country, competition from Hollywood films – and increasingly television – nevertheless remained a constant threat to the domestic industry. To counter this, the government passed further legislation designed to increase the potential of the film industry, a watershed point occurring with the passing of 1965's *Legge corona* (“Crown Law”): increasing subsidies, tax rebates, loss returns and credit facilities for domestic filmmakers (Wagstaff 1992, p.251). By the time these laws were passed, it was clear that Italy had not only regained a grasp on the domestic market, but had also become – albeit briefly – the most productive national cinema in the Western world, releasing two hundred and seventy films in 1964 compared to one hundred and eighty-one from Hollywood, one hundred and forty-eight from France, one hundred and eight from Spain, ninety-five from the UK

¹⁷ It is worth noting at this point that until 1967 Hollywood was still in adherence to the 1930 Hays Code, which amongst other self-censorship provisions forbade depictions of “sex perversion”, drug use, nudity and “suggestive dancing”, brutal killings, “vulgarity”, crime and foul language – a list which in fact offers quite a convenient overview of the *filone*'s thematic preoccupations. Somewhat ironically, it was an Italian arthouse film – *Blow-Up* (Italy / UK, Michelangelo Antonioni, 1966) that was the first film to be released in America *without* Hays Code approval and was instrumental in prompting the subsequent dissolution of the Code (BFI 2003).

and seventy-four from West Germany (UNESCO 1977, pp.30-34). From both an international and domestic perspective, it was clear that the *filone* had arrived.

1.3 Genre, Hybridity and the *Filone*

Although the central investigations of this thesis are primarily textual rather than historical, presenting this overview of key industrial and socio-economic developments is necessary for two main reasons. Firstly, to illustrate that these films did not simply arise from thin air; that the core of films to be examined in the following chapters form a cohesive body of *filoni* whose production was directly influenced by a set of favourable industrial conditions prompted by post-war realignments. Simply put, films were cheap to make, easy to find funding for, regularly cleared profit and any losses were partially absorbed by the Italian taxpayer: this explains why so many *filoni* were produced in the period examined. More importantly though, I have also taken this historical perspective to illustrate the fact that the *form* of the *filone* is inexorably intertwined with the industrial climate from which it arose. These films are not strictly “exploitation films” in the sense that critics like Schaefer use the term – low-budget independently-funded and distributed films concerned with “forbidden” topics (1999, pp.4-5) – but the *minutiae* of their plots, their character names, their actors, their choice of soundtrack, their titles, their dialogue and their use of violence and spectacle were nonetheless strongly influenced by a desire to exploit emergent trends in a fiercely competitive market. If a particular film did well at the box office, within a year there would typically be numerous Italian *filone* versions of that film on release across the country, many of them often marketed as direct sequels. As Bondanella points out:

The existence of faddish film genres created by numerous and rapid imitations of a single and often quite excellent pioneering work...is a typical characteristic of Italian cinematic culture. It is a function of the particular economic structure of its industry and reflects attempts by producers understandably greedy to reap quick and easy profits without incurring large financial risks.

(2001, p.161)

The velocity with which *filoni* were proposed, thought up, filmed, edited and released (often simultaneously) is even nowadays astounding. In his summary of the western *filone*, for example, Hughes notes that at the peak of the cycle's popularity between 1964 and 1967 there were two to three Italian westerns being released in cinemas *every week*, with the typical reasons for this speed being neatly summarised by Tristan Thompson and Paul Brown:

The core aspect that led to the rise of so many Italian [...] sub-genres was instigated by the success of the big-budgeted Hollywood product. Italian film producers famously threw into production their own (cheaper) version and had their product ready to export within weeks, designed to be released on the tail end of Hollywood and promoted as the “next big thing”. Indeed, great delight can be taken in telling contemporary cinema buffs that the Italians released their own version of *Alien 2*¹⁸ [...] within a year of Ridley Scott's 1979 original and a full six years before [James] Cameron's *Aliens* (UK / USA, 1986).

(2006, p.2)

On the other hand, when box office research showed a cycle of films was waning in popularity, the trend would quickly cease and be replaced by a more contemporary and profitable formula (Wood 2005, p.11). When *Dirty Harry* (USA, Don Siegel, 1971) and *The French Connection* (USA, William Friedkin, 1971) were successful in Italy, for example, the Italian film industry responded by releasing over three hundred *poliziotteschi* in the next nine years (Thompson and Brown 2006, p.2). When the popularity of these films began to diminish in the late 1970s, however, the cycle came to an end almost as quickly as it had started, with few *poliziotteschi* being released after 1980. Dalle Vacche offers a useful summary of the *filone* and its life span:

Rather than ‘genres’ in the Hollywood sense, [*filoni* are] well-planned investments of the industry into a regulated, but also stimulating, oscillation between repetition and difference, convention and invention. Unlike the Hollywood genre, the Italian *filone* has a brief life span and a hypertrophic size. It would seem that the *filone* is a genre that degrades itself into empty redundancy.

(1992, p.56)

There is more going on in this quote than a simple summary of the *filone*'s life cycle: also important here is Dalle Vacche's disavowal of the term “genre” as an adequate

¹⁸ *Alien 2 sulla terra / Alien 2* (Italy, Ciro Ippolito, 1980).

one to describe these films. Although repetition and difference of motifs and themes are themselves crucial to the establishment of genres in mainstream cinema, the comparatively brief and faddish nature of *filone* cycles that she alludes to suggests that most of them are not *enduring* enough to form “genres” in the same way as, for example, the Hollywood musical, gangster film or western have done. Yet immediately after setting the *filone* up in opposition to the Hollywood genre, Dalle Vacche proceeds to label the *filone* itself as a genre: while it may initially appear to be inconsistent with the logic of her argument, this final point actually provides a useful basis for my own study. One of the central outcomes of my research has been an increasing awareness that the films’ patterns of violence, spectacle and narrative are remarkably similar: similar enough, in fact, to suggest that they are far more usefully analysed as a cohesive body of films, subdivided into cycles that are largely distinguished by their configurations of *mise-en-scène* and formulaic narratives. As Wagstaff quite amusingly notes in his own study of the *filone*:

The narrative units of these formulas and subcategories are interchangeable; villains threatening, heroes rescuing, changing of alliances, pursuits and quests, etc. It can sometimes be hard to tell from the credits of a film and its synopsis whether a particular film is a spaghetti Western or an example of another formula such as bandit, gangster, Mafia, thriller or political suspense. A still, particularly if someone in the shot is wearing a hat, usually clears up the mystery.
(1992, p.252)

The key unifying factor that allows the *filone* to lend itself to such genre criticism is therefore, strangely enough, the inherent *hybridity* that it displays, which again can be attributed to the unique industrial conditions of the period described. The first and most immediate of these seems to be a *national* hybridity that can be traced across the different cycles and has led many commentators to question the national “authenticity” of many of these films.¹⁹ A revealing example of this can be found in Sergio Leone’s first western *filone*, 1964’s *Per un pugno di dollari / A Fistful of Dollars*, the cast and crew of which betray a striking multiplicity of national referents. The film was directed by an Italian with an American pseudonym (Leone credited himself as “Bob Robertson”); set in Mexico in the late 19th century; filmed in Spain and Italy with a Spanish and Italian crew; starring Spanish and Italian actors speaking

¹⁹ Eleftheriotis (2001), for example, refers to a number of typical commentaries portraying the Italian western as a mere bastardised “counterfeit” of its Hollywood counterpart, a tendency that can be found throughout Anglo-American accounts of the *filone*.

Spanish and Italian on set, with an American protagonist speaking English; financed by Italian, Spanish and West German money and, finally, based on a Japanese samurai film – *Yojimbo* (Japan, Akira Kurosawa, 1961) – which in turn was based on Italian play *The Servant of Two Masters* by Carlo Goldoni. Like so many of its contemporaries, in fact, *Per un pugno di dollari* exhibits an excess of generic, national and narrative referents that only further seems to emphasise its hybrid nature.

Again, many of the reasons for this hybridity were basically economic, for as well-formed as its film industry was in the 1960s, the fact remained that a country of Italy's small size, population and limited personnel could simply not compete with an industry the size of Hollywood. To overcome this handicap, production links were forged with both the USA and other European countries in order to provide enough equipment, filming locations, cast, crew and money to enter the international market, and co-production quickly became a central means of financing and distributing *filoni*. Whereas in 1950 only twelve percent of Italian films had been co-productions, by 1966 this figure had risen to fifty-one percent, with a whole forty-two percent of the Italian films in that sixteen-year period having being co-produced (Guback 1969, p.183). Involving other countries in the production process in this manner ensured adequate funding for Italian films, at the same time increasing their profits and popularity overseas – a process bolstered greatly by the aforementioned inclusion of non-Italian actors in the *filone*. Much of the international success of *Per un pugno di dollari*, for example, can be attributed to the inclusion of Eastwood, who was by then a staple feature of the internationally-popular American western television series *Rawhide* (USA, CBS, 1959-1966). Increasing involvement in the co-production sector in the 1960s and beyond therefore served to remap the “Italian” of Italian cinema in a way that contrasted sharply with the more “culturally pure” films that had gone before.

Another important explanation for the *filone*'s hybridity was the extremely concentrated nature of personnel within the Italian film industry and the inevitable “cross-pollination” between films that ensued. With production budgets being more often than not quite meagre, it was not uncommon for individuals to be working on two or more films simultaneously, nor for the same movie sets and actors to be used for multiple films in an attempt to minimise cost. Again, this not only created

hybridity but a distinct sense of excess in the films. For example, the Mexican “ghost town” setting from *Per un pugno di dollari* (filmed at the purpose-built *Hojo De Manzanares* village near Madrid), is recognisable in at least four more western *filoni*²⁰ and as such conveys meaning that seems excessive to the specific narratives of the films. The producers of horror *filone* *Zombi holocaust / Zombie 3* (Italy, Marino Girolami, 1980) similarly took advantage of existing film sets to keep their costs down, in this instance making their film with exactly the same sets and locations as *Zombi 2*. In some instances, soundtrack elements and footage from successful films were even recycled and incorporated into new *filoni*: among the most notable aspects of horror film *Virus / Hell of the Living Dead* (Italy, Bruno Mattei, 1981), for example, is its brazen re-use of Italian prog rock band Goblin’s score for *Dawn of the Dead* (USA, George Romero, 1979). Even the careers of *filone* directors connote notions of excess, with individuals typically working on a number of different films and often in a number of different roles: Leone, for example, worked as a cameraman, actor and second unit director as well as a director in his own right. Unlike Hollywood’s “genre auteurs” such as Douglas Sirk, Alfred Hitchcock and John Ford, most of the *filone* directors worked across a number of diverse film cycles, typically being prompted by opportunistic producers to make films in whichever was the most commercially successful style of the time. A characteristic example is Rome-born Lucio Fulci, who directed at least fifty-seven *filoni* in his thirty-year career. Although he would become synonymous amongst cult film enthusiasts with the “splatter” horrors of the 1980s and films such as *Zombi 2* and *L’aldila / The Beyond* (Italy, 1981), Fulci in fact began his directing career with comedies like *Urlatori alla sbarra / Howlers in the Dock* (Italy, 1960) before releasing westerns like *Le colt cantarono a morte e fu / Massacre Time* (Italy, 1966); *giallo* like *Una sull’altra / One on Top of the Other* (Italy / Spain / France, 1969); a medieval drama, *Beatrice Cenci* (Italy, 1969); a Jack London adaptation, *Zanna Bianca / White Fang* (Italy / Spain / France, 1973); *poliziotteschi* like *Luca il contrabbandiere / The Naples Connection* (Italy, 1980) and science-fiction films like *I guerri dell’anno 2072 / Rome 2033 – The Fighter Centurions* (Italy, 1984).

²⁰ Hughes cites *Minnesota Clay* (Italy / Spain / France, Sergio Corbucci, 1964); *Johnny West il mancino / Left-handed Johnny West* (Italy / Spain / France, Gianfranco Parolini, 1965); *Sette pistole per i MacGregor / Seven Guns for the MacGregors* (Italy / Spain, Franco Giraldi, 1966) and *All’ombra di una colt / In a Colt’s Shadow* (Italy / Spain, Giovanni Grimaldi, 1965) (2004, p.6).

The inevitable result of the Italian film industry being so condensed was a remarkable level of intertextuality across the cycles, a factor that now makes the task of categorising them as discrete “genres” very difficult. While the genre models typically used to analyse mainstream cinema by critics such as Altman rely on “clear, stable identities and borders” (1999, p.16), a significant number of the *filoni* are characterised by their generic *instability*, frequently combining and realigning the themes and visual referents of other cycles; the most notable of these being the horror film, which had the longest lifespan of the *filoni* examined and whose influence can be traced in the *filone*’s recurring scenes of extreme violence. Numerous examples of “hybrid” *filoni* can be found across the period examined: “political” westerns such as *Quién sabe? / A Bullet for the General* (Italy, Damiano Damiani, 1966); science-fiction-horror films like *Contamination* (Italy, Luigi Cozzi, 1980); horror porn films like *Holocausto porno / Porno Holocaust* (Italy, Joe D’Amato, 1981) and even *poliziotteschi*-horrors such as *Luca il contrabbandiere*. Although such overt hybridity is by no means archetypal of the *filone* as a whole, films like these are illustrative of the *filone*’s habitually intertextual nature.

The production of hybrid films in Italy was, of course, far less an attempt to create new and challenging art than it was a contrived and capitalistic industrial practice engineered to distinguish each product of the *filone* production line from its contemporaries and to respond to trends in the market. Key to this process was the typically exploitative manner in which these films were promoted to audiences, one which is discernible in the repetition of film *titles* across the *filoni*. With television becoming an increasingly fundamental part of European (and American) family life into the 1960s, the Italian film industry sought to adapt and capitalise on this by imposing a level of seriality on the *filoni* through aggressive, often completely disingenuous and typically aggressive marketing of films by their titles. It seems a crude assumption that the mere name of a film can be one of the most important factors influencing its commercial success, but this had in fact been a tried and tested technique since the end of the First World War. The success of 1914’s epic peplum *Cabiria* (Italy, Giovanni Pastrone) and in particular the popularity of its muscle-bound hero Maciste – played by Milanese docker Bartolomeo Pagano – spawned a number of post-war *filoni*, with at least fifty-four *pepla* being made with titles incorporating

the word “Maciste” in the next forty years.²¹ Other characters’ names also became valuable marketing tools for emergent *filoni*, a trend which was exemplified by numerous westerns titled round the characters of “Sartana”, “Ringo” and “Django”. In fact, as Hughes notes, after the commercial success of Sergio Corbucci’s *Django* (Italy / Spain, 1966) there were eighteen *filoni* made as part of the *Django* series in the next seven years and, remarkably, a further twenty-one completely unrelated *filoni* released abroad as part of the “franchise” in the 1960s and 1970s (2004, p.66). The fact that only two *Django* films featured Franco Nero²² (the first actor to play Django) and that only one was directed by Corbucci was as irrelevant to the Italian producers as the reality that any character called “Django” was completely absent from many of them.²³ What was more important was the fact that they could use the *Django* title as an economic brand for the films and help bolster the success of the films in potentially lucrative foreign markets.

This branding was also extended to form recurring patterns of language in titles that did not refer to characters: Western *filone* titles recurrently refer to “dollars”, “fistfuls” and “pistols”, as well as exclamatory phrases such as “if you live, shoot!”, “duck, you sucker!” and “my name is...”. The *pepla* refer to vampires, hell, monsters and epic battlegrounds such as Sodom, Atlantis and Marathon. *Giallo* titles reference eyes and frequently employ the names of animals like lizards, flies, spiders and cats in their titles, often posing questions such as *Chi l’ha vista morire / Who Saw Her Die?* (Italy, Aldo Lado, 1972) and *Cosa avete fatto a Solange / What Have You Done to Solange?* (Italy / West Germany, Massimo Dallamano, 1972). The *poliziotteschi* titles describe “violent Rome”, “violent Naples”, “violent Milan”, revolvers and magnums. Finally, towards the end of the *filone*’s lifespan, horror films were frequently marketed using the words “zombie”, “cannibal”, “nightmare” and “holocaust”. That this excessive promotion extended to the *form* of the films themselves comes as no

²¹ Imdb.com (1990).

²² As well as Corbucci’s original, Nero appeared as the eponymous hero of *Keoma* (Italy, Enzo Girolami, 1976) – marketed abroad as, amongst other titles *Django Rides Again* or *Django’s Great Return* – and more recently in the one-off “sequel” *Django 2: il grande ritorno / Django Strikes Again* (Italy, Nello Rossati, 1987).

²³ Examples include *Pochi dollari per Django / Some Dollars for Django* (Italy / Spain, León Klimovsky, 1966) – where the titular character is in fact called “Regan” – and *Se sei vivo, spara! / Django, Kill...If you Live, Shoot!* (Spain / Italy, Giulio Questi, 1967) where Tomas Milian’s protagonist is never referred to by name, illustrating the common device in western *filoni* of including anonymous “strangers” as protagonists.

surprise; it is fascinating to trace the development of themes and motifs in the *filoni*, which consistently sought to outdo each other by revisiting and subsequently exaggerating the aspects of their predecessors that were felt to contribute to their commercial success. Each new *filone* within a cycle would consequently be similar enough to the original to exploit its success but sufficiently different to be successful in its own right and, in the process, give rise to more films in the same style: the result of this was not only a distinct sense of excess but an often heady combination of intertextuality and originality that is perhaps best summarised by Kim Newman, who argues that:

While it is undoubtedly true that many Italian genre films are simply worthless carbon copies with a few baroque trimmings, the best examples of most cycles are surprisingly sophisticated mixes of imitation, pastiche, parody, deconstruction, reinterpretation and operatic inflation.

(1986, p.20)

To conclude this section, I would like to qualify my use of the terms *filone* and *cycle* in interrogating the films from my corpus of research. I have already insisted that the different types of film examined are devoid of the clear, stable identities and borders of the archetypal film genre, but it does not follow that prevailing Anglo-American models of genre are worthless in examining the *filone*. On the contrary, when these films are viewed as a collective whole, a number of recurring structural, visual and thematic traits emerge across them which point towards the examination of the *filone* as a genre in itself. Where mainstream horror and western films, for example, have been analysed – and are best understood – by critics such as Robin Wood (1986), Creed (1986), Kitses (1969) and Cawelti (1975) as wholly discrete bodies of work with their own distinctive narratives and themes, the high level of intertextuality in (and comparatively low level of differentiation between) the *filoni* suggests that far more information can be gleaned from analysing them as a cohesive body of films than as disparate strands of Hollywood genre film counterfeits.

This is, of course, by its very nature an exercise in reductionism, and I am by no means trying to ascertain that all of the *filoni* examined are the same – on the contrary, even today I am frequently surprised by the new and entertaining variants of

film that I am constantly discovering.²⁴ They do, however, share a remarkably high number of structural characteristics and are therefore best examined as a series of *filone cycles* – distinguished centrally by *mise-en-scène* – rather than individual genres in themselves. I have also shied away from using the term “sub-genre” to refer to these films, finding the word “cycle” to be far more illustrative of the intense but often fleeting nature of these concentrated bursts of cinema.

1.4 Popular *Filone* Cycles

While Chapter Two will concern itself with the many similarities that have prompted my examination of the *filone* as a genre, I would like firstly to examine the *differences* between the films by offering a summary of the main cycles to be examined and charting their rough individual lifespans. Doing this shall provide a historical backdrop to inform my subsequent analyses, as well as serving to illustrate the hybridities of the previous section and highlight the *filone*'s predisposition for excessive spectacle and violence. Film cycles are listed chronologically in order to form a historical narrative that roughly continues from where Section 1.2's industrial overview left off, and where possible I have sought to include promotional materials to give an idea of how the *filoni* were (and still are) marketed in Italy and abroad. Particular note should be paid to two factors here: firstly, the fact that the posters typically make the central spectacular referents of each cycle very clear and, secondly, that their portrayal of these referents is often excessive to the extent that the posters do not provide a “true” picture of what is actually in the films. Significantly, all of the posters (bar two) use paintings or drawings rather than photographs to promote themselves: this says far more about the potential of artistic renderings to make films with low production values appear more spectacular than they actually are than it does the posters' concordance with the films' *mise-en-scène*.

²⁴ In the months leading up to the completion of this work, for example, I was pointed by a cult film website towards a *kung-fu western filone* entitled *Il mio nome è Shanghai Joe / My Name is Shanghai Joe* (Italy, Mario Caiano, 1972): this film not only mixes western shoot-outs and settings with kung-fu sequences but also includes a graphic scene where the film's Chinese hero pulls out the eyeballs of one of his adversaries.

The Peplum

Literally named after the tunic worn by extras in these sword-and-sandal films, the peplum was one of Italy's first international *filoni* and enjoyed great success during the silent period with films like *Quo vadis?* (Italy, Enrico Guazzoni, 1912), *Cabiria* and *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompeii / The Last Days of Pompeii* (Italy, Mario Casterino / Eleuterio Rodolfi, 1913). Although much of its continued popularity and production was owed to Hollywood's own infatuation with mythological and Biblical epics in the 1940s – made prevalent in international successes such as *Ben Hur* (USA, William Wyler, 1959) and *The Ten Commandments* (USA, Cecil B. DeMille, 1956) – the subject matter of these *filoni* revolved around classical Roman and Greek mythology, with numerous films serialising the battles and brave feats of Hercules, Maciste, Ursus and Samson. Michèle Lagny (1992) typifies the peplum's central themes as being the veneration of sport and righteous male strength, as well as the glorification of the people: themes which would prove especially popular during Fascism, with Mussolini consciously echoing the visual imagery of the peplum hero through the bare-chested, muscle flexing aggression of his addresses to the nation. Figure 1.4.1 on the following page outlines some of the major iconographies of the cycle:

Figure 1.4.1 Italian, French and American Peplum Posters

| | |
|---|---|
| | |
| <p><i>Erocle e la regina di Lidia / Hercules Unchained</i> (Italy / France / Spain, Pietro Francisci, 1959)</p> | <p><i>Maciste, l'uomo più forte del mondo / The Strongest Man in the World</i> (Italy, Antonio Leonviola, 1961)</p> |
| | |
| <p><i>Gli invincibili dieci gladiatori / Spartacus and the Ten Gladiators</i> (Italy / France / Spain, Nick Nostro, 1964)</p> | <p><i>Maciste contro i mostri / Colossus of the Stone Age</i> (Italy, Guido Malatesta, 1962)</p> |

As the posters illustrate,²⁵ the peplum itself offers a number of distinct spectacles: mass battles with large numbers of extras; hand-to-hand combat; grotesque mythological monsters; beautiful princesses and of course the musculature and extraordinary strength – both physical and moral – of its central male hero. Pagano’s success as Maciste was mirrored by the recruitment of bodybuilders to fill the heroic roles required, with British strongman Reg Park and American former “Mister Universe” Steve Reeves acting in a number of pepla. In a trend common to all of the *filone* cycles, the peplum’s progressive exhaustion of variations on Greco-Roman mythology was countered by an increasing level of generic hybridity: by the time the cycle had run its course in the early 1960s – and in the process evolved into swashbuckling adventure films such as *L’invincibile cavaliere mascherato / The Invincible Masked Rider* (Italy, Umberto Lenzi, 1963) – its protagonists had battled against Vikings, druids, pirates, vampires, zombies, Amazon queens, and Egyptians, not to mention 18th century Scottish witches in *Maciste all’inferno / Maciste in Hell* (Italy, Riccardo Freda, 1962) and space aliens in *Maciste e la regina di Samar / Hercules Against the Moon Men* (Italy / France, Giacomo Gentilomo, 1964).

The Western

The most internationally successful (and critically rehabilitated) of the *filone* cycles remains, by far, the Italian western: after the success of *Per un pugno di dollari*, over four hundred western films were made before the cycle’s eventual decline in the late 1970s, with the mid-to-late 1960s specifically representing a period where, as Nowell-Smith argues, “almost an entire film industry turned [itself] over to the production of a single genre [sic]” (1996, p.68). There seem to have been two central reasons for the western’s meteoric rise in the early 60s. For one, audiences at home and abroad were evidently growing tired of the peplum *filone* (whose popularity had started to wane into the 1960s) and were looking for a more contemporary replacement. Just as important was the fact that the decline in Hollywood’s production of westerns had done little to quench European audiences’ seemingly insatiable thirst for them; Italian

²⁵ Upon viewing the films it is clear that these posters promise spectacles that are themselves in excess of the *filoni* that they are promoting: the musculature of bodybuilder actors Mark Forest, Reg Lewis, Steve Reeves and Dan Vadis is far greater on poster than it is on celluloid, and the stone age dragon of *Maciste contro i mostri* is far less convincing “in the flesh”.

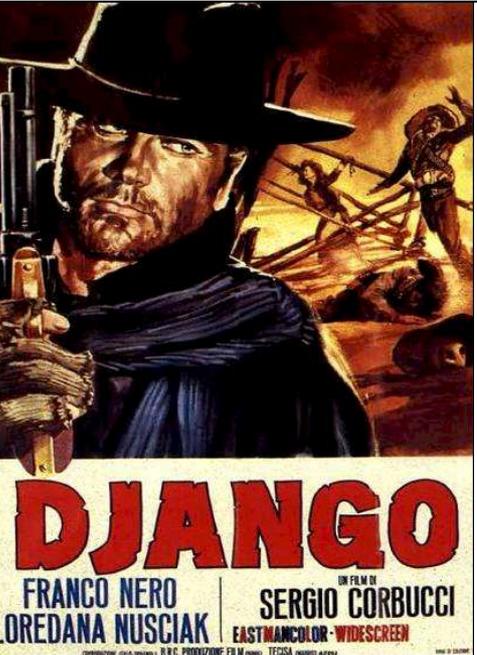
producers quickly addressed this gap in the market by filling it with their own variations on the formula. It is implausible to assume – as many commentators have done²⁶ – that in doing this the Italians were attempting to create authentically “American” products with their westerns, but the playful attitude that they took is clearly evident in the tongue-in-cheek American-sounding pseudonyms that cast and crew adopted and the films’ engagement with archetypal Western plots, history and characters, as well as the many titles which riff on those of American originals. Director Enzo Girolami (also named Enzo G. Castellari) became “E.G. Rowland”, actor Giuliano Gemma became “Montgomery Wood”, and films like *Mannaja / A Man Called Blade* (Italy, Sergio Martino, 1977) and *Buffalo Bill, l'eroe del far west / Buffalo Bill* (Italy / France / West Germany, Mario Costa, 1965) played with American-sounding titles. Furthermore, the mise-en-scène of the typically cycle betrays an obsession with images of sheriffs’ badges, stars-and-stripes flags, ramshackle frontier towns, Civil War uniforms and other Hollywood western iconography, used more often than not for spectacular, rather than historical or narrational, effect.

Once it became clear that there was a huge market in Europe for these films, the Italian industry went into overdrive to create a production line that was almost Fordist in its speed and proficiency. Three huge western sets were built near Rome – at Cinecittà, Elios and Dinocittà studios – while location scenes were shot to the West of Rome at Lazio and Abruzzo. Such was the demand for use of these sets, however, that the Italians had to look elsewhere, and quickly struck deals with Spanish investors (who were co-producing a large number of western films) to build and use a number of locations in Spain, particularly in Madrid and Almeria (Hughes 2004, p.xvii). Lead actors such as Henry Fonda, Charles Bronson and Van Cleef joined Eastwood on the list of imported actors, and by 1967 a number of US major distributors had started to buy the films in droves and show them for the first time to British and American audiences. Figure 1.4.2 on the following page gives an indication of how the Italian westerns were typically marketed, the emphasis on amoral violence being made clear through close-ups of weaponry and the grim expressions of the protagonists’ faces. Of particular note is the poster for *Se sei vivo, spara!*, a western whose horror-influenced

²⁶ Eleftheriotis (2001) again provides a useful overview of approaches to the Italian western as a “counterfeit” of Hollywood originals.

narrative (its “hero” comes back from the dead to exact revenge on the men who murdered him) are foregrounded by its emphasis on the hand’s “undead” motif, its shadowy backdrop and the predominance of the gun within the frame.

Figure 1.4.2 Western Posters

| | |
|---|---|
|  |  |
| <p><i>Per qualche dollaro in più / For a Few Dollars More</i> (Italy / Spain / West Germany / Monaco, Sergio Leone, 1965)</p> | <p><i>Django</i> (Italy / Spain, Sergio Corbucci, 1966)</p> |
|  |  |
| <p><i>Una pistola per Ringo / A Pistol for Ringo</i> (Italy / Spain, Duccio Tessari, 1965)</p> | <p><i>Se sei vivo, spara! / Django, Kill...If you Live, Shoot!</i> (Spain / Italy, Giulio Questi, 1967)</p> |

Along with *Django*, *Per un pugno di dollari* and its “sequels” *Per qualche dollaro in piu* / *For a Few Dollars More* (Italy / Spain / West Germany / Monaco, Sergio Leone, 1965) and *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo* / *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (Italy / Spain, Sergio Leone, 1966) provided a commercially successful template that ensuing *filoni* would quickly adapt: amoral revenge narratives;²⁷ nameless, drifting anti-heroes; Mexican villains; barren, featureless landscapes and the aforementioned fetishistic emphasis on guns, not to mention blood, churches, graveyards and money. As with the peplum, however, the western *filone* quickly adapted to create differentiation between film products, and numerous strains of the cycle evolved in the latter half of the 1960s and into the 1970s. Political westerns like *Quién sabe?* and *La resa dei conti* / *The Big Gundown* (Italy / Spain, Sergio Sollima, 1966) were joined by comedy westerns such as the influential *Lo chiamavano Trinita* / *They Call Me Trinity* (Italy, Enzo Barboni, 1970) and *Il mio nome e' Nessuno* / *My Name is Nobody* (Italy / France / Germany, Sergio Leone, 1973). The hybridity of kung-fu westerns (!) like *Il mio nome è Shanghai Joe* was matched by that of gothic horror westerns such as *Se sei vivo, spara!* and *Django il bastardo* / *Django the Bastard* (Italy, Sergio Garrone, 1974), another popular wave of *filoni*. As the most widely-produced of the *filone* cycles, it is not surprising that the western is perhaps the most intertextual, its long lifespan necessitating constant formal adaptation to remain relevant in a rapidly-changing market.

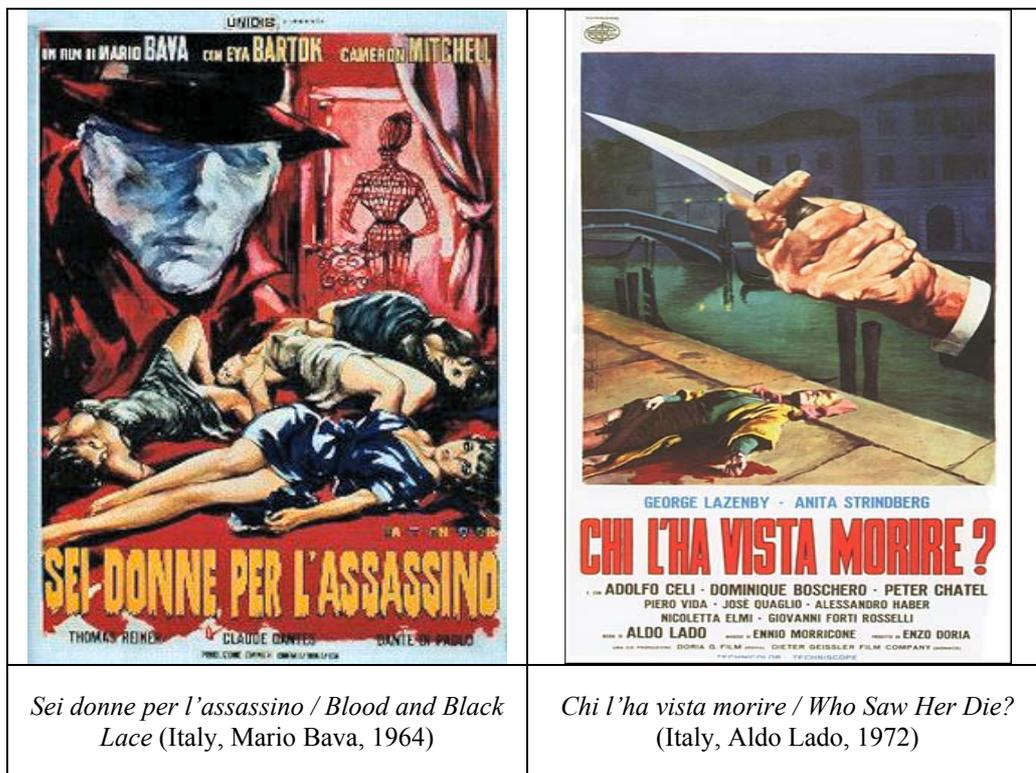
The Giallo

Although its popularity in Italy and abroad was never quite on a par with that of the western and the peplum, the *giallo* has persisted as one of the more enduring *filone* cycles. Literally named “yellow” after the luridly-coloured sleeves of the 1940s and 1950s Italian pulp detective novels from where the cycle drew many of its thematic concerns, the *giallo* first began to take shape in the early 1960s with Mario Bava’s successful films *La ragazza che sapeva troppo* / *The Girl Who Knew Too Much* (Italy, 1963) and *Sei donne per l'assassino* / *Blood and Black Lace* (Italy, 1964). The latter

²⁷ As my findings shall illustrate, a central feature of the *filone* is the weakening of narrative that it portrays; there nonetheless remain a number of archetypal narratives recycled and hybridised across the films. Frayling’s (1998) study of these westerns reveals a number of common variations of their plots.

film in particular concretised a number of traits that would become central to the cycle over the next twenty years: the inclusion of knife-wielding black-gloved anonymous killers; the interplay between reality and the supernatural; the baroque and prolonged spectacle of (typically bloody) murder scenes; the female as murder victim and the use of heavily stylised mise-en-scène. As Figure 1.4.3 shows below, these central motifs were typically foregrounded in the films' posters: the foregrounding of blood is a common theme, but in addition there is a marked predominance of primary colours (particularly red) that extends across all of the *filone* posters presented: even the colour schemes of these posters, it seems, are excessive.

Figure 1.4.3 *Giallo* Posters





By far the most critically and commercially successful of the *giallo* directors is Dario Argento, initially a film scriptwriter whose first most notable work was a collaboration with Bernardo Bertolucci on Sergio Leone's western *C'era una volta il west / Once Upon a Time in the West* (Italy / USA, 1968). By 1969 he had directed his first *giallo* – *L'uccello dalle piume di cristallo / The Bird with the Crystal Plumage* (Italy / West Germany, 1970) – which was quickly followed by *Il gatto a nove code / Cat O'Nine Tails* (Italy / France / West Germany, 1971) and *Quattro Mosche di velluto grigio / Four Flies on Grey Velvet* (Italy / France, 1971). With these films and the successful *Profondo Rosso*, Argento popularised a number of traits that would quickly be standardised by other less sophisticated *filoni*: the use of loud (typically prog-rock or jazz) music in drawn-out murder scenes; the engagement with psychoanalytic models to explain killers' motivations; the use of accidental non-detectives as investigative protagonists and, markedly, an even greater emphasis on spectacular violence, as Chapter Four's close analysis of *giallo Solamente Nero / The Blood Stained Shadow* (Italy, Antonio Bido, 1978) shall illustrate.

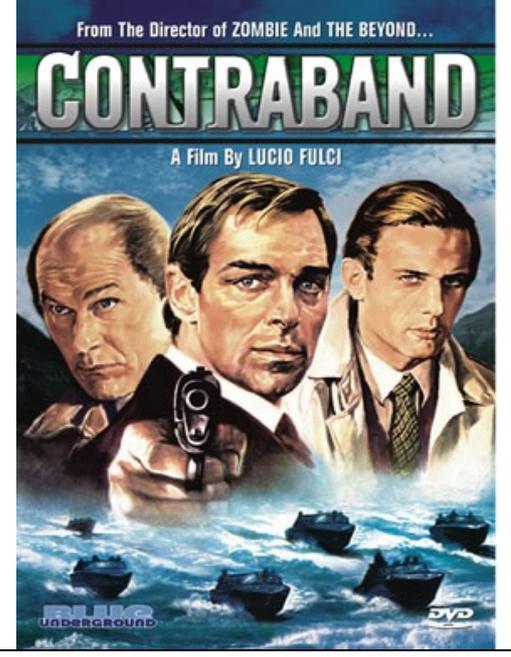
The 1970s also saw the release of a number of *gialli* from other directors, Aldo Lado's *Malastrana / Short Night of the Glass Dolls* (Italy / West Germany / Yugoslavia, 1971), Mario Caiano's *L'occhio nel labirinto / The Eye in the Labyrinth*

(Italy / West Germany, 1972) and Pupi Avati's *La casa dalle finestre che ridono* / *The House of the Laughing Windows* (Italy, 1976) being three popular examples of the cycle in its heyday. By the end of the decade, however, the *giallo* had all but died out, mutating into the graphic and frequently misogynistic "slasher" *gialli* popular in the 1980s such as *La casa sperduta nel parco* / *House on the Edge of the Park* (Italy, Ruggero Deodato, 1980), and Fulci's *Lo squartatore di New York*.

The *Poliziotteschi*

Another predominant *filone* cycle of the 1970s was the Italian *poliziotteschi* crime drama, whose popularity largely arose from the success of Hollywood's own "vigilante cop" films like *Bullitt* (USA, Peter Yates, 1969), *The French Connection* and *Dirty Harry*. Although, as Tristan Thompson notes, a tradition of minor Italian crime films is evident in films such as *Banditi a Milano* / *Bandits in Milan* (Italy, Carlo Lizzani, 1968) and *La legge dei gangsters* / *Gangster's Law* (Italy, Siro Marcellini, 1969), it was in the early 1970s that the cycle really began to take off, growing in popularity to a high point in 1976, when over fifty of these films were produced in one year alone (2006, p.3). *La Polizia ringrazia* / *Execution Squad* (Italy / France / West Germany, Stefano Vanzina, 1971) was one of the first successful *poliziotteschi* and was followed by Enzo Girolami *La Polizia incrimina la legge* *assolve* / *High Crime* (Italy / Spain, 1973) which also proved to be a commercial hit. As the 1970s progressed, a number of actors and directors would become synonymous with the *filone*: Maurizio Merli, Tomas Milian and Fabio Testi all played a number of iconic rogue cops, and many of the more successful *poliziotteschi* such as *Roma a mano armata* / *Rome, Armed to the Teeth* (Italy, 1976), *Il trucidato e lo sbirro* / *Tough Cop* (Italy, 1976) and *Napoli violenta* (Italy, 1976) were directed by Umberto Lenzi. Figure 1.4.4 on the following page provides some representative examples of marketing materials for these films:

Figure 1.4.4 *Poliziotteschi* Posters

| | |
|--|---|
|  |  |
| <p><i>Roma a mano armata / Rome, Armed to the Teeth</i> (Italy, 1976)</p> | <p><i>La polizia ha le mani lagate / Killer Cop</i> (Italy, Luciano Ercoli, 1974)</p> |
|  |  |
| <p><i>Uomini si nasce poliziotti si muore / Live Like a Cop, Die Like a Man</i> (Italy, Ruggero Deodato, 1976)</p> | <p><i>Luca il contrabbandiere / The Naples Connection / Contraband</i> (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1980)</p> |

Once again an examination of typical promotional materials highlights the *poliziotteschi*'s key visual referents: guns, police, car and bike chases and the Mafia. An emphasis on the destructive power of the .44 Magnum became more prevalent in the wake of *Dirty Harry*; a trait exemplified by the titles of *filoni* like *Poliziotto senza paura / Magnum Cop* (Italy / Austria, Stelvio Massi, 1977) and *Napoli si rubella / A Man Called Magnum* (Italy, Michele Massimo Tarantini, 1977). Taking as subject matter real Italian cities and Italian people – rather than the mythical landscapes of the American West or the Greco-Roman age – allowed *filone* directors to engage with (or, more typically, use as the pretext for staging violence) contemporary socio-political issues at a time of vast upheaval in Italy. The *poliziotteschi* began to tire in the late 1970s, with attempts to reinvigorate the cycle by placing one of its key actors in a gothic Western setting (Merli in 1977's *Mannaja*) and incorporating elements of the horror *filoni* (1980's *Luca il contrabbandiere*) signalling both the demise of the traditional *poliziotteschi* and the arrival of the horror film as a more popular *filone* in Italy and abroad.

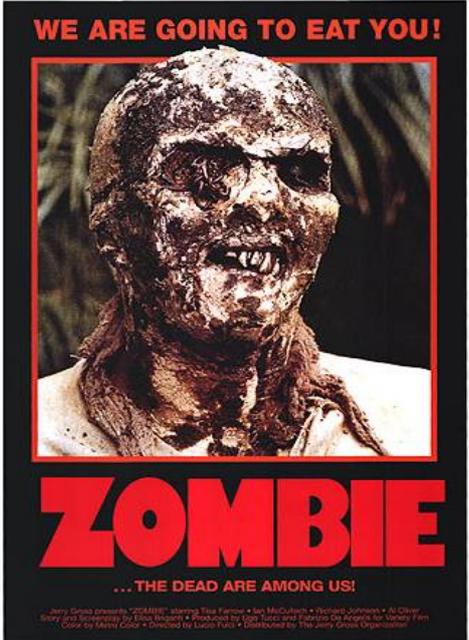
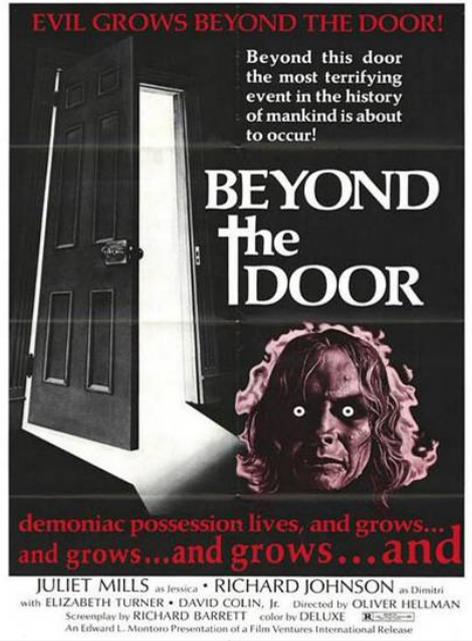
The Italian Horror Film

Perhaps the most enduring of the *filoni*, the Italian horror film's popularity stretched from the early 1960s until the end of the 1980s, a period when the horror film was at its most fashionable in America and the UK as well as Italy. With each decade came a number of new variations on the cycle: after the disappointing performance of Riccardo Freda's *I vampiri / Lust of the Vampire* (Italy, 1957) – generally regarded to be the first Italian horror film – producers used their analysis of the market to swiftly establish that Italian audiences were more predisposed to mainstream horror films such as *The Quatermass Xperiment* (UK, Val Guest, 1955) and, notably, hugely successful British Hammer films such as *The Curse of Frankenstein* (UK, Terence Fisher, 1957) and *Dracula* (UK, Terence Fisher, 1958). Freda's *L'orribile segreto del Dr. Hichcock / The Horrible Dr. Hichcock* (Italy, 1962) was symptomatic of a trend towards emulating the British style but, as Newman notes, “the luridness of their subject matter (necrophiliac adultery) would have made them unproduceable in Britain” (1986, p.22). At the same time, the gothic horrors of Bava and his contemporaries were proving to be successful, largely due to the presence of Barbara

Steele, who appeared in such successes as *La maschera del demonio*, *Amanti d'oltretomba / Nightmare Castle* (Italy, Mario Caiano, 1965) and *Cinque tombe per un medium / Terror Creatures from the Grave* (Italy, Mario Pupillo, 1965).

The 1970s saw a demise in the gothic horror *filone*, with the *poliziotteschi* and *giallo* rising to the forefront of popular cinema throughout the decade. However, the success in Italy of *Rosemary's Baby* (USA, Roman Polanski, 1968) and *The Exorcist* (USA, William Friedkin, 1973) sparked off the release of a number of “demonic possession” *filoni* such as *Chi Sei? / Beyond the Door* (Italy, Ovido G. Assonitis / Robert Barrett, 1974), *L'anticristo / The Antichrist* (Italy, Alberto de Martino, 1974) and *L'ossessa / The Sexorcist* (Italy, Mario Gariazzo, 1974). In similar fashion, after Don Edmonds' exploitation film *Ilsa, She-Wolf of the S.S* (USA / West Germany, 1975) was successful, a number of horror-softcore-“nazisploitation” *filone* followed in its wake including films like *L'ultima orgia del III Reich* and *La bestia in calore / The Beast in Heat* (Italy, Luigi Batzella, 1977). At the same time Argento's films were veering more closely towards supernatural themes, and the success of *Profondo Rosso* was soon matched by that of *Suspiria* (Italy, Dario Argento, 1977) and *Inferno* (Italy, Dario Argento, 1980). The lengthy lifespan of the horror *filone* and its many variants over the years makes it almost impossible to encapsulate all of the cycle's main visual referents; the posters in Figure 1.4.5 on the following page present only a small range of examples. Once again, while the images traded on may be different (zombies; female victims; monsters; Nazi Germany) all of the posters share an emphasis on spectacle and the threat of violence (which is literally stated on *Zombi 2*'s poster).

Figure 1.4.5 Horror *Filone* Posters

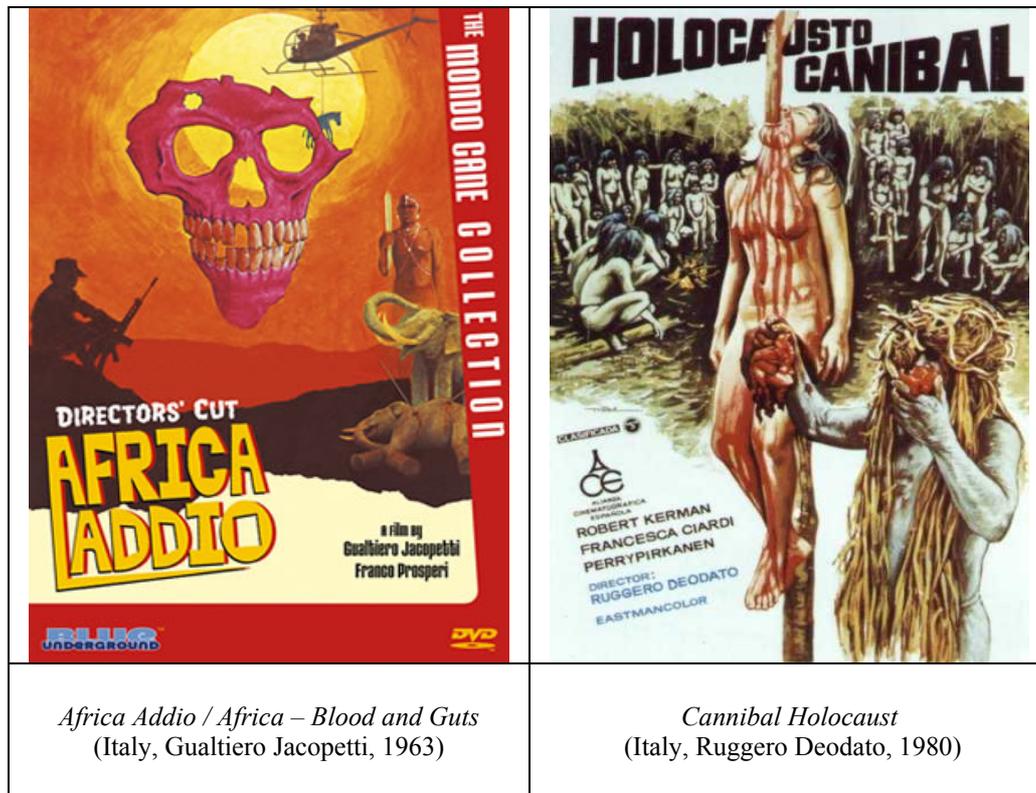
| | |
|---|--|
|  |  |
| <p><i>La maschera del demonio / Black Sunday</i> (Italy, Mario Bava, 1960)</p> | <p><i>Zombi 2 / Zombie Flesh Eaters</i> (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1979)</p> |
|  |  |
| <p><i>Chi Sei? / Beyond the Door</i> (Italy, Ovido G. Assonitis / Robert Barrett, 1974)</p> | <p><i>Dèmoni 2 / Demons 2</i> (Italy, Lamberto Bava, 1986)</p> |

The Italian horror film's most prolific period was the early 1980s, when the popularity of Hollywood "slashers" such as *Halloween* (USA, John Carpenter, 1978) and *Friday the 13th* (USA, Sean Cunningham, 1980), science-fiction horrors like *Alien* (UK / USA, Ridley Scott, 1979) and *Videodrome* (Canada, David Cronenberg, 1981) and zombie films such as *Dawn of the Dead* provoked a wave of similar horror *filoni*. With the influence of the horror film most keenly felt through the explicit violence and elongated scenes of spectacle that can be found across most of the films examined, it is perhaps no surprise that the horror cycle remains the most wide-ranging of the *filoni*, with a number of sub-cycles emerging. The gothic, demonic possession and Nazi *filoni* described earlier were soon joined across the decade by zombie films like *Zombi 2* and *Zombi holocaust / Zombie Holocaust* (Italy, Marino Girolami, 1980); post-apocalyptic / virus outbreak horrors like *Incubo sulla città contaminata / Nightmare City* (Italy / Mexico / Spain, Umberto Lenzi, 1980) and *Virus* and "creature" horror *filoni* such as *L'ultimo squalo / Great White* (Italy, Enzo Girolami, 1981), *Rats - Notte di terrore / Rats* (Italy / France, Bruno Mattei, 1984) and *Troll 2* (Italy, Claudio Fragasso, 1990).

Minor Filone Cycles

Although the five cycles were the most popular and numerous of the *filoni* – and therefore dominate the corpus of films to be discussed and analysed in the following chapters – I would like to conclude this section by mentioning some of the other less prevalent cycles that crop up in the period examined. The first of these is one of the few cycles *not* to have risen from a Hollywood antecedent, namely the *mondo* (literally "world") *filone*, which arose from the huge worldwide success of *Mondo Cane* (Italy, Paulo Cavara / Gualtiero Jacopetti, 1962). The *mondo* film can loosely be described as a sensationalist travelogue; a "shockumentary" presenting exotic, bizarre and often erotic spectacles from abroad. With commercial air travel becoming increasingly popular among Europe's rapidly-expanding middle classes, the *mondo* film capitalised on the public's growing interest in travel, exploration, the Third World and the new sights and sounds that it presented, as shown by the two posters in Figure 1.4.6 on the following page:

Figure 1.4.6 *Mondo / Cannibal Film Posters*



These posters provide a useful précis of the *mondo* film’s central spectacles: tribespeople from South America and Africa; the killing and eating of exotic animals; footage of real-world death and violence and bizarre, often sexual, customs. More often than not these often gruesome and seedy sequences were accompanied by an authoritative (and normally grossly misinformational) voiceover and incorporated, quite bizarrely, one or more easy-listening orchestral tunes, a trend instigated by Riz Ortolani’s Oscar-nominated score for *Mondo cane*. Successful *mondo* films included *Le schiave esistono ancora / Slave Trade in the World Today* (Italy, Maleno Malenotti, 1964) and *Africa Addio*, although as the cycle went on, as Newman notes, it soon became obvious that “many of the peculiar social and sexual practices attributed to various remote peoples were [...] being staged in Roman studios” (1986, p.23). Once again, the cultural authenticity of the films being promoted was far less a consideration than the potential for profit presented by such “peculiar” – and therefore spectacular – practices.

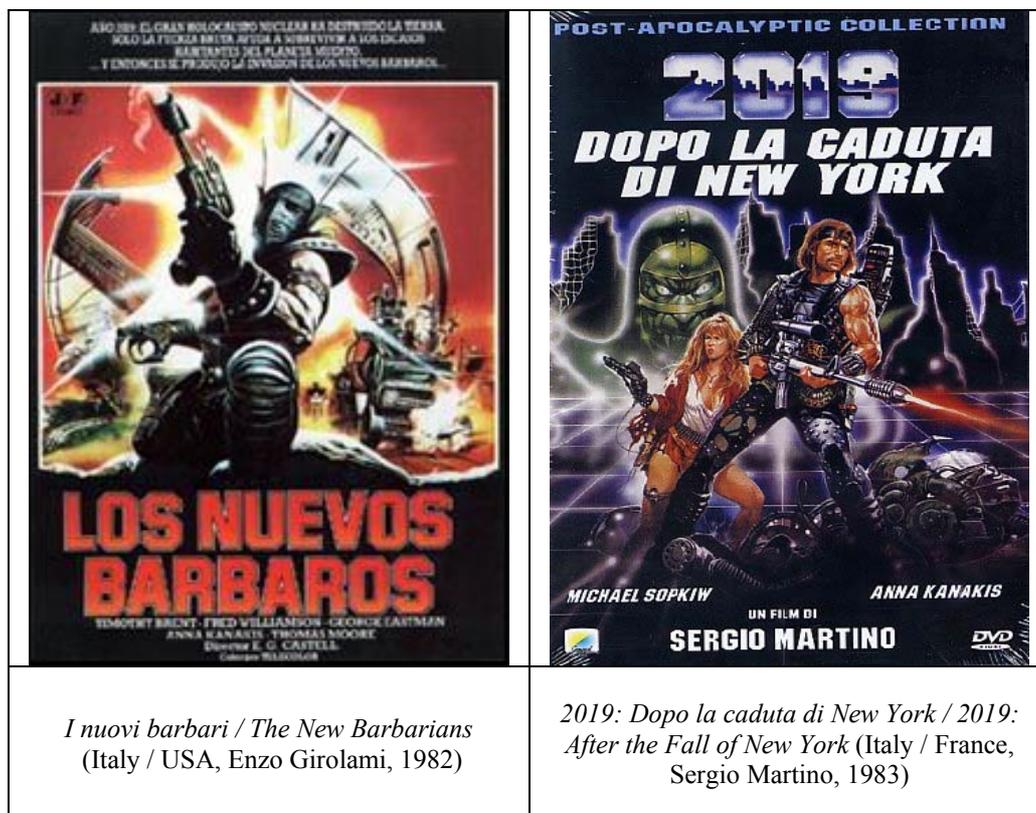
By the beginning of the 1970s, the *mondo* film was itself all but extinct, but its aesthetics made a significant return in the highly controversial “cannibal” *mondo* films of the late 1970s and early 1980s, typified by films like *Cannibal Holocaust* (Italy, Ruggero Deodato, 1979) and *Cannibal Ferox* (Italy, Umberto Lenzi 1980), where actuality footage of real-life violence (and, most notably, animal mutilation and killing) was combined with dramatic scenes and visceral special effects, adding further weight to the notion that commercial exploitation of audiences was a far more important concern for Italian producers than such trivialities as taste, decency and morality. The *mondo* film was rarely popular in the same way as more mainstream *filoni*, but since the advent of VHS it has enjoyed popularity in cult and exploitation film markets along with numerous American “shockumentaries” such as *Snuff* (Argentina / USA, Michael and Roberta Findlay, 1976) and the *Faces of Death* series.²⁸

Other cycles of limited lifespan also rose up across the period examined, disappearing as quickly as they had arrived once their popularity began to wane. There was, for example, a brief trend in the 1960s of “secret agent” and “international spy” *filoni*, largely prompted by the success of “James Bond” films such as *Dr No* (UK, Terence Young, 1962) and *Goldfinger* (UK, Guy Hamilton, 1964). Films such as *Agente 077 missione Bloody Mary / Agent 077 – Mission Bloody Mary* (Italy / Spain / France, Sergio Grieco, 1965), *Diabolik / Danger: Diabolik!* (Italy / France, Mario Bava, 1968) and *Bacie e spara / Kiss Kiss...Bang Bang* (Italy / Spain, Ducio Tessari, 1966) obsessed over spies, international scandals, gadgets and kitsch Bond parodies. The 1980s saw an increase in science-fiction *filoni*, with post-apocalyptic dramas such as *2019: Dopo la caduta di New York / 2019: After the Fall of New York* (Italy / France, Sergio Martino, 1983) and *1990: I guerri del Bronx / 1990: The Bronx Warrior* (Italy, Enzo Girolami, 1982) competing with emergent fantasy *filoni* such as *Thor il conquistatore / Thor the Conqueror* (Italy, Tonino Ricci, 1983), *Gunan il guerriero / The Invincible Barbarian* (Italy, Franco Prospero, 1982) and Fulci’s *Conquest* (Italy / Spain / Mexico, 1983). Although these *filoni* are far more minor in terms of their longevity and popularity than the central cycles discussed, I have endeavoured to

²⁸ More recently, some valuable critical literature has been devoted to the both the Italian *mondo* film and its overseas contemporaries. Kerekes and Slater’s (1995) study of “death films” *Killing for Culture* remains the most useful overview of these films.

include some of them in the corpus of films studied in order to give added breadth to the arguments presented. As Figure 1.4.7 below suggests, the majority of these films’ were “sold” by their posters’ emphasis on violence, weaponry and the “exotic” spectacles of the films’ mise-en-scène (futuristic costumes; post-apocalyptic ruins; aliens; secret agents; beautiful and partially-clad women) that typically never live up on screen to the excesses conveyed by their marketing materials:

Figure 1.4.7 Other Minor *Filone* Posters





The *Filone* in Decline

Although such 1980s *filoni* as the science-fiction and fantasy cycles were successful in Italy and abroad at the time, their popularity could do little to reverse a decline in film production that had started in the mid-1970s and continued towards the mid-1980s. In 1972, for example, when westerns, *giallo* and the emergent *poliziotteschi* cycle were competing with a number of domestically-produced comedies, dramas and arthouse films, Italy produced (and co-produced) a total of two hundred and eighty films, more than were ever made before (and after) in one single year. By 1985, however, this number had steadily fallen to eighty-nine films in that year, a change that was reflective of heavily dwindling cinema attendances, which fell in the same period from almost five hundred and fifty-four million tickets to around one fifth of that number in the same period (Nowell-Smith, Hay and Volpi 1996, pp. 159-163). The reasons for this are numerous, but one central cause seems to have been the increasing influence of television on Italian society: as Restivo notes, by 1971 seventy-one percent of Italian households possessed a television, and television culture was growing at a rapid rate in the country (2000, p.45).

The predominance of televisions in Italy also created a culture where films were often more readily enjoyed on the small screen. As Wood notes, the arrival of the 1970s essentially signalled a move between:

[...] a model where television used old cinematic productions indiscriminately to fill its schedules to a model where cinema became a cultural event on television with films presented in seasons arranged around directors, themes, schools, screenwriters, actors and interpreted by a growing army of critics.

(2005, p.21)

With cinema audiences already being lost in this way, Italy's headlong foray into deregulated television at the end of the 1970s sprung the film industry into even further decline as audiences were wooed by a number of commercial television programmes. Furthermore, along with this domestic threat came the international threat posed by Hollywood, which in the mid-to-late 1970s regained its grip on the Italian market by exporting a number of hugely successful blockbuster movies such as *Jaws* (USA, Steven Spielberg, 1975) and *Star Wars* (USA, George Lucas, 1977). By 1985 American films were almost completely dominating Italian box offices: as Wood notes, these films had longer runs in cinemas, higher ticket prices and appealed to a growing demographic of middle-class Italian teenagers (2005, p.28). Although a number of *filoni* were still being made and continued to enjoy modest domestic and international success, by the 1990s the *filone* was largely a spent force, with the increasing globalisation of media industries further limiting Italy's abilities to dominate its own cinematic culture. From the height of Italian cinema's "golden age" – where there were over sixty thousand cinemas in the country – the film industry's decline was such that by the mid '90s there were only three thousand eight hundred and sixteen left (UNESCO 1978, p.68; UNESCO 2002). Although individual *filone* directors such as Lamberto Bava and Dario Argento continue to make films on low budgets (and often video rather than film) for a largely cult audience, most of the directors from the period examined who are still working moved to directing television movies and programme episodes in the 1990s, a measure of how dramatically the Italian film industry has changed since the days when it was at points the most productive popular cinema in the western world.

1.5 Censorship

To conclude this historical overview of the rise, success and eventual decline of the *filone* in Italy, I would like to highlight *censorship* as being a final factor external to the films that helped to shape their preoccupation with specifically violent spectacles. There exist a number of possible explanations for the *filone*'s emphasis on spectacular and violent, rather than narrative, pleasures. Critics like Sorlin (1991) suggest that this trend owes much to the influence of Catholicism and Renaissance art in Italian culture, while others such as Dalle Vacche (1992) have viewed cinema as a continuation of the spectacular traditions of opera and the *commedia dell'arte*. Suggesting that such visual traditions are reflective of Italy's recent history (in comparison to the other major European states) as a unified country,²⁹ Dalle Vacche in fact suggests that:

The subordination of word to music in opera and to gesture in the *commedia*, is a phenomenon literary historians explain by referring to the *questione della lingua* (chronic absence of a national literary language). Unlike literature, by relying on the body rather than on the word, opera and the *commedia dell'arte* are succeeded across different regions and social classes throughout a still-divided Italy.
(1992, p.5)

The emphasis on visual – rather than linguistic or narrative – pleasures can thus be seen as a method of imbuing the *filoni* with a certain universality, allowing the films to appeal to a wide range of cinemagoers from across regional, linguistic and even class divides. Furthermore, in the context of export cinema such bias towards *mise-en-scène* also could be seen to facilitate the success of the films in non-Italian-speaking markets abroad; this was evidently a central reason for the typical “nationlessness” of the *filoni*.³⁰ Besides, is not hard to see why such a heavy emphasis on *mise-en-scène* emerged in an industry where directors relied almost exclusively on post-production dubbing and foley sound recording; a process undermining narrative coherence and realism in dialogue scenes. That such an emphasis should typically be configured in scenes of spectacular *violence*, however, suggests that factors outwith

²⁹ It was only after the end of the *Risorgimento* in 1871 that the disparate states of the peninsula were brought together.

³⁰ Again, Eleftheriotis (2001) lays out a very convincing reading of the *filone*'s lack of specifically Italian referents in his study of the western.

the industrial context were also important. Rather than put forward a series of conjectures about exactly *why* the *filoni* were violent, or what the reasons were for Italian art's emphasis on spectacle, I would like to eschew arguments of nationality³¹ and instead concentrate on the (more quantifiable) legislative and industrial factors that created an environment where violent films could emerge, without being banned or censored, at a time where both Hollywood and the UK were exercising far stricter controls on their films.

In the years immediately following the fall of Fascism in Italy, the newly-appointed Christian Democrat government was keen to promote a more progressive approach than the Fascists to censorship of the arts,³² and its Constitution of 1947 amongst other things sought to promote the "free expression and diffusion of ideas" (Tohill and Tombs 1995, p.33). This of course did not mean that the content of films remained unchecked in the following decade: films could still be seized by magistrates following complaints from citizens or on their own whims, and concrete legislation was abandoned in favour of what critics like Sorlin have labelled "a censorship more severe than that of Fascism" (1996, p.87). Under these somewhat partisan conditions, the Government would withdraw money from potentially "offensive" scripts in favour of bankrolling more "healthy" pro-Italian or pro-Church alternatives: again, this necessitated the exercise of self-censorship rather than overt editing or the re-shooting of scenes. The Church continued to exert a strong influence on censorship developments, although the edits that were made typically revolved around issues of blasphemy and gender representation rather than violence. As Wood notes:

Between 1948 and 1968 the Censorship Commission and the Catholic Church caused problems for films that projected a pessimistic view of the Italian family, and therefore women's traditional role. Female power became a sign that something was amiss.

(2005, p.155)

³¹ Indeed, one of the central limitations of studies of Italian cinema like Sorlin's (1996) and Dalle Vacche's is their attempt to find out what is "genuinely Italian" about the films; evaluating them based on their adherence to "Italianness" rather than their structures or place within the industry.

³² Under Fascism the government had the power to censor, edit or completely ban any film that they deemed offensive; Benito Mussolini reputedly watched almost every film before it was released, permitting or banning it on his own judgement. Surprisingly, very few films were actually censored during this period, for scripts had to be examined at pre-production by the Government before being greenlit for funding (Reich 2002b, pp.12-13).

In 1962 the power to censor and ban films was devolved to the Minister of Tourism and Public Performance, and a commission was set up allowing certain films to be limited to over-eighteens, over-fourteens or to be banned outright if they constituted an offence to public morals. The latter stipulation led to much confusion in the following decades, as local magistrates frequently took the law into their own hands, “blithely seizing and destroying films as the whim took them” (Tohill and Tombs 1995, p.33). In the most widely-documented case of censorship in Italy, upon its release *Ultimo tango a Parigi / Last Tango in Paris* (Italy / USA, Bernardo Bertolucci, 1972) was banned and all prints destroyed, the same fate befalling *Salò, o le 120 giornate di Sodoma / Salò* (Italy, Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1975). The banning of the latter in particular illustrates the importance of violence’s *context* to the Italian censors, a point that can be illustrated by drawing on the paracinematic aesthetic to compare the film with “nazisploitation” *filone* *La bestia in calore / The Beast in Heat* (Italy, Luigi Batzella, 1977), released two years after *Salò*. Both films are set during the Second World War and focus on the degrading treatment of prisoners by the Fascists; both include graphic scenes of sexual violence (rape, sodomy, genital mutilation) and numerous other filmic “taboos” (infanticide in *La bestia*, coprophagia in *Salò*). Yet while Italian censors had no problems passing the *filone* for release, the obvious political context of *Salò*’s violence led them to deem the film as obscene. There lies a distinct irony in the fact that two of Italy’s most “serious” arthouse films were deemed to be more morally corrupt than the graphic and fantastical horror, crime, western, *giallo* and pornographic *filoni* on release at the time, despite trading in similar controversial visual referents. Bizarrely, arthouse films such as *Glissements Progressifs du Plaisir / Successive Slidings of Pleasure* (France, Alain Robbe-Grillet, 1974) were often incriminated by censors, the director of this particular film being taken to court on obscenity charges simply because it “didn’t make sense” (Tohill and Tombs 1995, p.33). Clearly the *context* of *filone* violence – intended as “light entertainment” for a mass audience – was less troubling to the censors than the potentially more subversive or amoral violence of political and arthouse films. As a result very few of the *filoni* seem to have been censored or banned in this manner, a notable exception being *Cannibal Holocaust* which was declared obscene, confiscated by the Italian censors and banned in Italy until 1983 (Kerekes and Slater 2001, p.110).

In making these assertions, I am not attempting to provide a comprehensive account of Italian censorship: for one, the retrospective and Anglo-American context from which I am approaching the films precludes any close analysis of their reception in Italy. Equally, it is not my intention to focus in depth on the numerous cuts and outright bans imposed on the *filoni* by the BBFC when they were exported to the UK, particularly after the furore surrounding the Video Recordings Act 1984.³³ What is important, however, is that the fairly lax and imprecise censorial environment described was an ideal one within which films that foregrounded graphic scenes of violence could emerge unchecked and subsequently multiply. Spectacular and stylised violence in a film could, just like its use of lead actor, soundtrack, *filone* cycle or title, frequently boost a film's profits and exploit emergent gaps in the market: violent motifs, set-pieces, special effects, sets, and even shot sequences from successful *filoni* were habitually borrowed, repackaged and inflated by subsequent films, each trying to capitalise on the originals' success by making these sequences more and more excessive. As Tohill and Tombs note, Italian producers were "always vying with each other to bring out films that [were] just that little bit more daring than their rivals' previous releases" (1995, p.33).

Such exaggeration of violence and spectacle was also, of course, a central means of differentiating product within an intensely fragmented industry. In 1967, for example, forty-three Italian production companies made only one film – a western – each (Wagstaff 1992, p.250), creating a market that was flooded with films of a very similar nature; one central means of distinguishing a western from its competitors was simply to intensify and stylise the violence that it presented. For example, in an attempt to capitalise on the success of 1966's original *Django* (itself a particularly graphic *filone* including scenes of ear mutilation and blood-letting), in 1967 Italian production company *GIA Società Cinematografica* and Spanish producers *Hispaner* responded by releasing a "sequel" in the aforementioned *Se sei vivo spara!*, which not only aped the original's gothic style but also responded to its violence by presenting a more extreme mutilation in its elongated "scalping" scene. In a market constrained far more by finance than taste or censorship, *filoni* such as this could exploit and flaunt violence and spectacle as economic commodities in a seemingly effortless manner.

³³ A far more in-depth analysis and discussion of UK film censorship and the infamous "Video Nasties" – of which, notably, almost one half were *filoni* – can be found in Kerekes and Slater (2001).

1.6 Conclusion

Focusing at length on the various Italian legislative, industrial and censorial developments of the 20th century has allowed me not only to provide a general introduction to the phenomenon of the *filone*, but also to emphasise the importance of the influence that industrial and censorial developments external to the films had on shaping the themes identified in my corpus of study. Furthermore, in the process I have also illustrated some of the factors that have traditionally made critics uncomfortable upon approaching it. As my introduction hinted, one central reason for the *filone*'s incompatibility with traditional academic film discourses arises from the sheer sense of excess that these films and their production and distribution context convey. The *filoni* are fundamentally “bad fit” texts whose excesses of not just spectacle and violence but also hybridity, intertextuality and even marketing do not sit comfortably with established models of narrative, genre or nation. Too intertextual to be clear-cut “westerns”, “horror films” or “crime thrillers”; too playfully violent and spectacular to be “serious”; too focused on excess to be examined as “narrative cinema” and too international in their casts, crews and visual obsessions to be “authentically Italian”, they sit uneasily within – and are more often than not largely absent from – critical accounts and histories of Italian cinema.

Having contextualised the films and summarised their differences in this way, the task in hand now is to begin addressing this critical imbalance by going *beyond* generalisations of the film's “brutal”, “dehumanising” and supposedly “anti-cultural” nature to focus on the films themselves: how their excesses are conveyed; what draws them together; how their narratives operate; what pleasures they provide the viewer and, notably, what it *is* about them that makes them so brutal in the first place.

Chapter 2

Investigating Violence and Spectacle in the *Filone*

2.1 Introduction

It is remarkable to note the frequency with which violence – and particularly excessive violence – has been held up by critics as being perhaps the central defining characteristic of the *filone*, and Guback’s disavowal of the films’ “anti-cultural” nature – written at the height of their popularity in the late 1960s – is by no means alone in its castigation of their more excessive elements. Leprohon, for example, discusses the Italian western in terms of the “atmosphere of brute force” that it introduced to cinema, suggesting that “even the most elaborate westerns indulged in a fantasy of sadism and brutishness” (1972, pp. 125-6). Barry, in his discussion of the *poliziotteschi*, argues that the cycle was “steeped in brutality, sex, drugs and other western trappings” (2004, p.82). Finally, in her discussion of the *giallo* Wood cites its distinguishing features as being, amongst other things, “misogyny and noticeable elements of sadism and sado-masochism” (2005, p.53). Once again, the vague term “brutality” and its variants are never far from the vocabulary of critics of the *filone*.

Clearly, there is something about the way the *filone* depicts and uses violence that exceeds boundaries of taste, acceptability and narrative necessity, and this notion is reiterated by the numerous lower-level fan discourses that continue to reflect the popularity of these films in the cult video, laserdisc and DVD market. Also referring to a viewing of *Zombi 2 / Zombie Flesh Eaters* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1979) as his initial introduction to the *filone*, fanzine editor Shawn Smith describes his experience on watching the film for the first time:

Zombi 2 was unlike anything any of us had ever experienced, and to this day nothing has ever topped it [...]. Fulci set a new standard for violence in horror cinema with the now-infamous splinter in the eye, the cool-as-fuck zombie shark attack, the juiciest arterial spurting ever committed to film and the exciting gore-soaked climax.

(1996, pp.9-10)

Such emphasis on the predominance of the violent act in the *filone* is not merely limited to the typically violent horror cycle, however: in his introduction to the Italian western, for example, Hughes suggests that the films are typified by their

“striking religious imagery, blood-drenched violence and echoing, ethereal music” (2004, p.vii), and Thompson and Brown lay emphasis on the *poliziotteschi*’s “violent and totally uncompromising” nature in their study of the cycle (2006, pp.2-3). In academic and fan discourses alike it is violence that is consistently identified as the central *raison d’être* of the *filoni*. Yet as my introduction noted, what is striking about the majority of such accounts is the fact that they rarely, if ever, go beyond their generalisations of “violence”, “brutality”, “sadism” and “gratuitousness” to reveal what it actually *is* about these films that makes them so violent, let alone clarify exactly what “film violence” really is. This issue foreshadows the work to be undertaken in Chapter Three, but before going on to consider the theoretical frameworks that can both illuminate and be challenged by the films, I would like firstly to foreground the *filoni* themselves by presenting an analytical overview of violence in the films examined.

The central plan of this chapter is therefore to present a series of findings gleaned from the viewing of the *filoni* listed in the appendices and the subsequent close textual analysis of the fifty films that make up my central corpus of study. While the previous chapter sought to differentiate between the various *filone* cycles discussed and highlight their variations, the task at hand now is to focus on the more significant factors that bind the *filoni* together; with this in mind the first section of this chapter shall begin by discussing some of the prevalent patterns of violent acts across the cycles. In doing this I shall not only examine what it is about *filone* violence that has resulted in the films being recurrently labelled as “extreme” or “brutal” (and frequently cut, censored and banned outside Italy as a consequence) but also lay out one of the fundamental claims of this thesis; namely the idea that it is not so much the acts themselves that are extreme but the *excessive* manner in which these acts are presented to the viewer. By focusing on the theme of *suffering* as a fundamental theme of *filone* violence I intend to investigate the extent to which often already-extreme violent acts are elongated and magnified in order to present an overinvestment in violence and its spectacular qualities, at the same time examining the various methods by which this process commonly takes place.

The second section of this chapter moves on to examine a more specific type of violence that is instantly discernible in the *filoni*, namely the abundance of *ocular*

mutilation scenes in the films. One thing that quickly became clear on my viewing of the films was that *Zombi 2*'s scene was by no means isolated in its depiction of violence towards the eyes, and this section seeks to investigate the significance of this particular act. This in fact paves the way for the chapter's third section, which highlights the *filone*'s disposition towards "harming" the eyes of the actual *viewer* of these scenes. Examining a number of *filoni* where violent acts are seemingly committed against the camera itself, this section identifies this recurring "camera violence" as one of the *filone*'s most distinctive traits and works through the ramifications that such a specifically "textual" violence has on the viewer and the spatial and temporal continuities fundamental to coherent narration.

Having discussed violence in this manner, the fourth and final section of this chapter steps back to examine the wider framework of narrative and excess within which these violent acts are but one component. Even when the *filoni* are *not* depicting violence, they are still frequently revelling in the paracinematic "violation" of the continuities, stabilities, logic and motivations of mainstream film narratives: I shall draw out this claim by further scrutinising the distinctive narrative structure of the *filone*, highlighting in the process the devices other than violence which are recurrently used to create spectacle in the films. Carrying out this introductory and wide-ranging analysis will allow for the presentation of a set of hypotheses to be examined, elucidated and tested by the more thorough textual analyses of Chapters Four to Six, as well as pointing towards potential relevant theoretical frameworks to be introduced and tested in the third chapter of the thesis.

2.2 Suffering and Torture

Perhaps the *filone*'s most instantly apparent signifier of "brutality" and "sadism" is the strong emphasis on *human suffering* that can be traced across a considerable number of the films examined; an element that goes some way to explaining the initial feelings of disgust that I felt upon watching *Zombi 2*'s eye-mutilation sequence. Forty-one seconds of this scene elapse from the moment when the viewer is made aware that Menard's head is being dragged towards the splinter until the point where the sequence ends. Of these forty-one seconds, twenty-five are devoted to cutting

between shots of Menard's eye approaching the camera, point-of-view shots of the splinter approaching the camera and re-establishing side-on shots of her head approaching the splinter. Although such cross-cutting and alignment with character point-of-view is by no means discontinuous with conventional patterns of editing and *mise-en-scène*, the fact that this section of the sequence is shot entirely in extreme and medium close-up illustrates the extent to which a distinct *overinvestment* in suffering is prevalent in violent *filone* sequences like this, where an act that is shocking in itself is rendered even more disturbing by the form of the film.

This emphasis becomes even more marked when the splinter enters Menard's eye; an act that is drawn out for nine seconds and emphasised by cuts between reverse shots of her face and extreme close-ups of the splinter piercing it. Remarkably, the sequence saves its closest extreme close-up for depicting this event, which is accompanied on the soundtrack with similarly amplified and stylised screaming and squelching sounds. It is hard to stress just how wholly unpleasant the act of viewing this combination of extreme elements for nine seconds really is, but more important is the realisation that the emphasis here is not just on the violent act but also the level of suffering that its victim endures. The majority of the shots in this sequence are not only close-ups but centrally-framed *facial* close-ups, further demonstrating the way in which such suffering is frequently elongated and rendered excessive by combinations of *mise-en-scène*, editing and soundtrack. This idea is even further concretised by the last shot of the sequence, a facial close-up of Menard screaming and the splinter jutting out of her eye socket, held tightly in view for six long seconds.

Such scenes of suffering are commonplace throughout the *filoni* examined, and frequently manifest themselves in the sequences of punishment and torture that litter the films. It is not hard to see why such scenes are popular in the *filone*, for they provide handy segments within the films' narratives where the threat of violence, the violent act itself and the suffering incurred throughout can be foregrounded and amplified under the pretence of plot advancement. *Zombi 2* may not focus explicitly on torture or punishment, but its overinvestment in images of suffering is shared across a number of films from different cycles and years of production. This process can be traced in the *filoni* from the peplum onwards: for example, *Teseo contro il minotauro* / *The Minotaur* (Italy, Silvio Amadio, 1961) – a rough reworking of the

Greek Theseus myth – includes a scene where a prisoner is slowly lowered by a torturer onto a bed of burning coals. Although long shot is used here rather than the extreme close-ups of *Zombi 2*, shooting at this length allows the film to show the extent to which the whole prisoner's body is being burned, and even after his screams have stopped the film cuts back to show him being raised, motionless and scalded, off the coals. A following scene shows Theseus himself being tortured: having been captured by the villain's guards he is chained up and interrogated by a torturer, who rips off Theseus' smock and places a burning hot poker against his bare nipple, accompanied by a loud scream on the soundtrack.

La vendetta di Ercole / Goliath and the Dragon (Italy / France, Vittorio Cottafavi, 1960) also includes a number of torture scenes: a prison guard who has betrayed the film's villain, Eurito, is chained up and whipped repeatedly by another guard, and later on in the film Eurito captures one of Goliath's female accomplices and lowers her into a pit of snakes. Although she is eventually lifted, unharmed, out of the pit, the extent with which the film tries to emphasise and overinvest in the suffering presented is fascinating: a low angle medium shot from the pit shows her looking into it and, just as in *Zombi 2*, the film cuts to a point-of-view shot from her perspective. Rather than present a static and "realistic" perspective from which to frame this point-of-view, however, this shot is an exceptionally fast crash zoom in to the snakes at the bottom of the pit, which are held in extreme close-up at the end of the shot. That this shot is accompanied by an ominous orchestral flourish and a series of loud screams only further highlights this character's suffering, and as she is lowered into the pit these screams intensify, with close-ups of the snakes being intercut with high-angle shots of her dangling feet to add further weight to the torturous act depicted.

Such an emphasis not just on torture but also on its *implements* is also common in the *filone*: western film *Se sei vivo, spara! / Django, Kill...If you Live, Shoot!* (Spain / Italy, Giulio Questi, 1967) portrays a similar "animal torture" sequence where the film's protagonist, Django, is captured by bandits, stripped half naked, tied to a crucifix and left to be menaced by lizards and "blood-sucking vampire bats". Although spatial relations between Django and the animals are unclear (they are never in fact shown in the same frame), the film cuts between extreme close-ups from high and low angles of his pained expression and similarly-framed close-ups of the bats

and lizards. For sixty-one seconds the film remains locked in close-up and extreme close-up, the soundtrack dominated by creaking sounds and animal squeaks and scratches that create a markedly uncomfortable atmosphere: again, while there is no discrete act of violence taking place here, the scene is memorable for its obsession with suffering and the tools used to create it – be they splinters, snakes or vampire bats. The same is true, in fact, for a notable film that is *not* one of the *filoni*, namely Roberto Rossellini's neorealist film *Roma, città aperta* / *Rome, Open City* (Italy, 1945), which presents a similar interrogation scene where an anti-Fascist rebel (Manfredi) is captured and tortured by the Gestapo. Sconce's arguments once again spring to mind at this juncture, for although *Roma* is widely accepted to be one of the "classics" of Italian art cinema, the scene described deals with much the same visual themes as the *filone*. Critics like Bondanella have gone so far as to label this episode as "one of the most horrifying scenes in the history of filmmaking" (2001, p.40); again, much of the impact of this sequence is created by an emphasis on suffering and its tools. Like Django, Manfredi is stripped and pinned against the wall with arms outstretched, but rather than being tortured by animals he is repeatedly whipped, beaten and stabbed by the German officer, who at one point sets him on fire with a blowtorch. Following on from a series of earlier close-ups where the various tools to be used to torture Manfredi were displayed – whips, picks and knives – this sequence of shots is all the more disturbing and again foregrounds an emphasis on suffering.

Although *Roma* uses devices similar to those of the *filoni* described, the different context within which this suffering is placed in Rossellini's film appears to point towards the contrasting *function* of suffering in the neorealist film. While in the *filoni* discussed these acts are seemingly drawn-out and rendered excessive for the purpose of creating spectacle, the fact that *Roma*'s scene occurs in a rigidly political and thematic context affords it a seriousness and integration with narrative that is typically absent in the more playful scenes from *Teseo*, *Se sei vivo spara* and *La vendetta di Ercole*. It is essential for the film's ideological project that *Roma*'s hero is *seen* to be tortured so explicitly; his suffering is *seen* to be so intense and his torturer is *seen* to be so callous, for this works to further reinforce the political oppositions between Fascism and rebellion (not to mention the *thematic* oppositions between good and evil, hero and villain) that are central to the film – as such, the depiction of violence does not exceed its narrative function. In the four *filoni* sequences mentioned,

however, violence and suffering are elongated and mediated by the films in a manner that seemingly provides the viewer with the “best” view of events at the expense of any wider thematic or symbolic narrative-based function that they may possess; the result being the emergence of excess, formal bizarreness and stylish eccentricity.

Torture scenes in the *filone* do not always provide their viewer with such stylised views of violence and its implements, however. Western *filone* *Django* (Italy / Spain, Sergio Corbucci, 1966) presents two notable scenes of torture and mutilation, the first occurring when one of the villains, General Hugo, cuts off a corrupt preacher’s ear and attempts to feed it to him. Again, this graphic act is shown in tight facial close-up, accompanied by the preacher’s screams and a trumpet flourish on the soundtrack; elements which work in conjunction with the images to emphasise the suffering and extremity of the act but also to mark it out as something that is enjoyable to look at. In contrast, the second torture scene poses a distinct problem to my “best view” hypothesis: occurring towards the end of the film, this sequence depicts one of General Hugo’s henchmen punishing Django by breaking his hands and fingers with a rifle butt. As in the previous scenes examined, close-ups of the act explicitly taking place are used (and similarly amplified by the sound of loud crunches and trumpet flourishes on the soundtrack) but over the twenty-eight-seconds during which the beating takes place there are two distinct cuts *away* from the act: a seventeen-second-long medium shot pan across the other henchmen, watching with apparent delight, and a slow zoom to an extreme close-up of Hugo’s similarly gleeful facial expression. The fact that greater time and emphasis is placed on these cuts away from – rather than shots *of* – the violent act suggests that such scenes can also be intensified and overinvested in by juxtaposing a victim’s suffering with the obvious pleasure that the onlookers to the violence are deriving. It is seemingly not enough for the viewer to bear witness to Django’s mutilation and to focus on his pain: somewhat paradoxically, in scenes such as this the spectacle of violence can be intensified by looking *away* from suffering, but at the same time laying emphasis on the *diegetic* spectacle that it offers to the other characters.

Herein, perhaps, lies one of the central reasons for the *filone*’s alleged “sadism”: the fact that scenes of torture and punishment like this more commonly than not take place in front of an audience whose frequently delighted and excited expressions are

magnified by a series of facial close-ups. In the *poliziotteschi* *Luca il contrabbandiere / The Naples Connection* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1980), one of the film's *Mafiosi* tortures a girl who has cheated him in a drug deal by burning her face with a Bunsen burner. Yet again, the majority of this sequence is shot in close-up, with very explicit shots of the girl's burning face being intercut with recurring facial close-ups of the *Mafioso* and shots of his henchman, whose apparent delight in savouring such a spectacle is indicated by an extreme close-up of his eyes and cheekbones raised in a smile. An interesting contrast with *Roma* emerges here, for while Rossellini's film also presents a similar "burning" torture (and an audience outside the room whose reactions are shown), at no point do its editing and mise-en-scène suggest that Manfredi's mutilation is in any way *enjoyable* for the viewer to look at. The decision *not* to create spectacle from this act is in fact vital to *Roma*'s narrative purpose of portraying the torturer (an effete Nazi who is clearly enjoying his work) as evil and sadistic; for this sequence to "work" there must be a gulf between the Nazi's appreciation of the act and the viewer's disgust – rather than pleasure – at watching it. In *Luca*, however, the torturer, the onlooker and the viewer are all complicit in appreciating the spectacle that violence presents, which renders the act of mutilation depicted even more extreme.

The *filone*'s "look away" from violence is occasionally even foregrounded to the extent that no acts of violence are explicitly shown at all, leaving the viewer to make sense of what is going on by attempting to piece together these disorientating shots. Science-fiction *filone* *I nuovi barbari / The New Barbarians* (Italy / USA, Enzo Girolami, 1982) presents a central scene where its protagonist, Scorpion, is chained up, bent over and sodomised by the film's villain, "One". Again, to adequately describe just how disorientating and bizarre this short sequence is would perhaps take a chapter in itself, but there are two important aspects that it displays. Firstly, in lieu of explicitly showing the act, the film instead relies on very rapid cutting between facial close-ups of Scorpion's pained expression and One's perverse grimace – as well as short, amplified synthesiser stabs on the soundtrack – to convey the violence taking place. Secondly, the spectacle that such an act offers is intensified by incorporating a number of facial close-ups of the onlookers, again stressing that this act of suffering is one that should be watched and dwelt upon both inside and outside *I nuovi barbari*'s diegesis. This particular scene is perhaps an extreme example, but it illustrates a

definite trend in the *filone* to create spectacle by inferring rather than showing violence (not to mention the taboo nature of homosexual sex in these typically male-oriented films).

Of equal predominance in the *filoni* examined are scenes of torture and punishment which intensify their spectacles by cutting away to facial close-ups of onlookers who are *disturbed*, rather than pleased, by the violent acts taking place. One of the most extreme scenes of *filone* violence occurs in *mondo* film *Cannibal Ferox* (Italy, Umberto Lenzi 1980), where one of the film's protagonists (Mike, played by notorious *filone* actor Giovanni Lombardo Radice)³⁴ is castrated by one of the "cannibal" tribesmen who he has spent much of the film torturing. As in films like *Luca il contrabbandiere* and *Django*, this extremely graphic act is shown in tight close-up and intercut with close-ups of Mike's agonised expression, but this time there is no suggestion that his torturer is enjoying the experience. In fact, during the castration the film chooses not to present any facial close-ups of the torturer, focusing instead on a medium shot of Mike's two friends (who are watching on and screaming in terror) and a consecutive facial close-up of his other friend's horrified reaction. While this use of cutaways is far less "sadistic" than in the other torture scenes examined – nobody in this sequence seems to be deriving pleasure from the violence – the fact remains nevertheless that these cutaways are still creating spectacle from violence through *inference*. In truth, scenes like these highlight a fascinating and unique disposition of the *filoni*: the films are not only full of violent scenes where a single helpless and defenceless man or woman is tortured or punished by a single aggressor, but they typically – and in fact almost without fail – take place in front of a diegetic audience.

Another (less common) violent theme in the *filone* is its tendency to portray such scenes of suffering using discernibly *religious* iconography. On viewing the sequences described from both *Roma* and *Sei se vivo, spara!* it becomes quite clear that the tortures described are set up and filmed in a way that draws overt parallels to

³⁴ Radice, often credited in American prints of his films as "John Morghen", is infamous among horror *filone* fans for his many brutal deaths: amongst other fates he is burnt alive in *Assassinio al cimitero etrusco / Murders in the Etruscan Cemetery* (Italy / France, Sergio Martino, 1982), has a power drill pushed through his skull in *Paura nella città dei morti viventi / City of the Living Dead* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1980) and shoots himself in the head in *La setta / The Sect* (Italy, Michele Soavi, 1991). MacCormack (2004) provides a particularly interesting overview of Radice's many deaths.

popular crucifixion imagery: both the former's rebel and the latter's protagonist are pinned up against the wall, arms outstretched, and centrally framed by symmetrical compositions presenting them in Christ-like poses. A number other *filoni* also toy with similar imagery: the hero of western *Keoma* (Italy, Enzo Girolami, 1976) is beaten up, dragged behind a horse and tied up, arms outstretched, to a wheel. Viking-themed peplum *L'ultimo dei Vikinghi / The Last of the Vikings* (Italy / France, Giacomo Gentilomo, 1961) presents a scene where its protagonist King Harald finds his brother nailed to an X-shaped cross and has to pull the nails out himself by hand. In the sepia-tinged opening sequence of horror *filoni* *L'aldila / The Beyond* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1981) a lynch mob pin their "warlock" victim to a wall, hammering nails into both his wrists; this spectacle is rendered even more excessive by the film's decision to present the mutilation via a tight close-up of the *stigmata* and the blood violently gushing out of them. Even the softcore *filone* was not averse to using such religious imagery: porn-horror demonic possession film *L'ossessa / The Sexorcist* (Italy, Mario Gariazzo, 1974) presents the story of a girl who is possessed (and driven to acts of masturbation) by a demon who comes to life on a wooden crucifix – a scene which quite effectively illustrates the latent disregard for symbolism or deeper religious meaning in the *filoni* that play with such iconography.

It is perhaps no surprise that such religious visual referents emerged in a country steeped in such a long tradition of Catholic art; the emphasis on sufferance and crucifixion can be traced in Italian art back to the Renaissance of the 16th and 17th centuries and beyond. In the *filone*, however, what a crucifixion signifies in terms of religion, culture or nation is of far less import than the potential for creating spectacle that it harbours. The crucifix in the *filone* thus becomes no more or less symbolic than the other visual fetish objects and intertextual referents of the cycles, be they ten-gallon hats; mythical monsters; zombies; black-gloved killers; Roman temples or .44 Magnum pistols. As Eleftheriotis notes of the western *filone*:

While in the American western clothes, guns, and horses are key iconographic elements linking specific representations with cultural and historical contexts, in *Ringo and his Golden Pistol* objects are detached from such significance and presented mainly for their pure visual qualities.

(2001, p.122)

2.3 Ocular Mutilation

One of the most instantly conspicuous violent trends in the *filone* is mutilation of the *eyes*, a trend that is discernable in *pepla*, westerns, *gialli*, horror films and *poliziotteschi* alike. It was, I think, the breaking of this taboo in *Zombi 2* that caused the entire film to have such a profound effect on me (and on others, as Smith's quote at the start of this chapter illustrates), for the act seemed to represent a level of filmic violence that I had never until then encountered. Even my initial distaste at viewing *Un Chien Andalou* (France, Luis Buñuel, 1929) and its equally infamous eyeball slicing had been tempered by the knowledge that such a mutilation had been used by Buñuel and Salvador Dalí in a distinctly surrealist and ideological context. On being presented with a similar act in *Zombi 2*, however, where ocular violence was not just explicitly shown but additionally elongated and coded by the editing, *mise-en-scène* and sound as being something to look at, to even *enjoy* looking at, my reaction was to find the act even more unsettling.

The inherent extremity of ocular mutilation in cinema is also discussed by Linda Ruth Williams, who argues that:

Damage to eyes recurs as a symbol of the worst possible violence, a spectacular last straw in horror far more disturbing even than representations of fatal injuries to vital organs.
(1994, p.14)

That such a typically horror film-based type of violence could be reiterated in *non-horror filoni* makes clear the influence of the horror cycle and its iconography on the other cycles examined; equally pertinent is the fact that ocular mutilation provided *filoni* with a very handy device for the quick presentation of extreme “last straw” violence, as well as a way of distinguishing themselves from (and attempting to outdo) the other *filoni* that they were typically in aggressive competition with. There are, resultantly, a number of *filoni* from each cycle which present acts of (seen and unseen) eye mutilation. *Teseo*, for example, includes another typical torturer-victim-onlooker scene where the film's heroine Ariadne is chained up in a dungeon and threatened by a hot poker-wielding torturer while her female captor Phaedra watches on. Theseus arrives just in time to protect her, and the torturer throws the poker at his head: he quickly ducks to avoid it, the poker hits Phaedra in the eye, and she staggers

blindly into a deep pit to be eaten alive by tigers. While the puncturing of the eyeball is not shown in this case (and is in fact rarely shown as explicitly in the *filoni* as it is in *Zombi 2*), once the poker has hit her head the film cuts to a reverse medium shot of her upper body and face, with the huge burn scar and gaping hole around her eye clearly visible and centrally-framed.

Ocular mutilations are also traceable in the *poliziotteschi* and western cycles, for example when a police informant in *Uomini si nasce poliziotti si muore / Live Like a Cop, Die Like a Man* (Italy, Ruggero Deodato, 1976) is caught by the film's Mafia villain and beaten up: the *Mafioso*'s henchman then gouges out the informant's eyeball with his thumb as punishment. Once again the violence of the act is intensified by looking away from the mutilation, with a crash zoom into the disgusted face of the *Mafioso* – accompanied by the informant's loud scream – implying the extremity of the act. In a pivotal scene from western *filone* *Mannaja / A Man Called Blade* (Italy, Sergio Martino, 1977) the film's eponymous hero is ambushed by his enemies, who bury him up to his neck in sand, pin his eyelids open with nails and place a spike under his chin so as to angle his gaze into the midday sun. Although this specific type of “non-physical” eye violence cannot be shown explicitly by the film, *Mannaja* makes every attempt possible to intensify Blade's suffering by intercutting close-ups of his anguished face with point-of-view shots of the sun's glare blinding the camera lens. Finally, as my introduction noted, in kung-fu western *Il mio nome è Shanghai Joe / My Name is Shanghai Joe* (Italy, Mario Caiano, 1972), the main character Joe at one point performs a “karate” move whereupon he punches one of his adversaries and pulls out one of his eyeballs. Bizarrely, this act is shown via two very quickly-edited “point-of-view” shots: from the victim's perspective Joe punches towards the camera, then from Joe's perspective his own fist is shown recoiling towards the camera, cradling a large, bloodied and centrally-framed eyeball shot in close-up to add emphasis to the most excessive spectacle that this action presents. Unsurprisingly, such extreme and graphic depictions of eye violence are in fact far more common in the horror *filoni*, where ocular mutilation often becomes the *ne plus ultra* of spectacles presented. An early example of this is gothic horror *La maschera del demonio / Black Sunday* (Italy, Mario Bava, 1960), the opening scene of which depicts a group of hooded priests punishing a “witch” (played by Italian horror icon Barbara Steele). As in many of the films already mentioned, the witch is tied up and

rendered defenceless while a crowd of spectators (shown in facial close-up) watch her demise. One of the priests then hammers a spiked mask (the “Mask of Satan” from the film’s Italian title) into her face, driving its two spikes into her eye sockets. From the witch’s point-of-view there is a shot of spikes being thrust towards the camera (just as in *Zombi 2* and *Shanghai Joe*) before the film cuts to a reverse shot (again similar to that of *Shanghai Joe*) showing blood gushing out of the eyeholes of the mask.

The carefree manner with which such ocular mutilations were incorporated as an intertextual means of increasing profit perhaps reached its creative apex in the various attempts made by directors post-*Zombi 2* to “better” the film’s infamous eye mutilation. Lucio Fulci’s own *L’aldilà*, made just two years later, refers somewhat self-referentially to this scene by reversing it: one of the film’s protagonists is attacked by a zombie, who rather than drag him towards a splinter instead pushes the victim’s head back towards a huge nail in the wall, impaling the back of his head and poking his eye out from behind the socket, an act that is further accentuated by the use of an extreme side-on close-up showing the eyeball being dislocated. This one-upmanship continued, and escalated, into the 1980s: *Cannibal Ferox*, for example, includes a scene where Mike, before his death, gouges out one of the native’s eyeballs with his knife in tight close-up; characters in Fulci’s *Paura nella città dei morti viventi / City of the Living Dead* (Italy, 1980) inexplicably start bleeding from their eyeballs during one sequence; one of the titular monsters of *Demoni / Demons* (Italy, Lamberto Bava, 1985) rips the eyes out of a blind man’s head and, even more preposterously, a zombie in *Virus / Hell of the Living Dead* (Italy, Bruno Mattei, 1983) rips out a character’s eyeballs through her mouth. Finally, in Dario Argento’s *giallo Opera* (Italy, 1987) a notorious sequence is presented where the film’s protagonist is forced to watch her lover being butchered after the film’s killer tapes needles under her eyelids, and the same film also presents scenes where the killer shoots out a victim’s eyeball and a raven pecks out a character’s eyes. Such ocular mutilations may not occur in the majority of *filoni*, but it is intriguing to note the comparative frequency with which this most extreme and distinctly “non-mainstream” type of violence is used across the cycles examined.

The excesses of violence that such acts represent in the *filoni* can be clarified by noting that in the majority of the films described, there is no real *narrative*

requirement for ocular mutilation to take place. Two of the films examined in this chapter problematise this: the scenes that follow *Mannaja*'s "sun torture", for example, involve Blade staggering about blindly in a cave and trying to regain his sight, and *Uomini*'s Mafia punishment method works to reinforce the sadistic nature of its *Mafioso* villain, as well as to provide a symbolic punishment to a police informant who has used his eyes to spy on the Mafia. In summary, both of these ocular mutilations *are* embedded within the framework of the narrative. In the majority of other sequences discussed, however, ocular mutilation is simply not essential to the plot developments presented and is thus largely surplus to narrative motivation. The fact that the perpetrators of violence in these films *choose* to harm the eyes of others, of course, conveys information about their characters: Shanghai Joe's act of pulling out his enemy's eyes reinforces his martial arts skill and knowledge of intricate karate moves, for example, and Mike's choice of mutilation in *Cannibal Ferox* helps reinforce the idea that he, like *Roma*'s Nazi, is an evil sadist, making his eventual punishment at the hand of the natives far more acceptable within the narrative's moral framework. Nevertheless, the unerring emphasis placed by the *filoni* on the spectacular qualities that such acts provide seems far in excess of their narrative function within a number of films where – quite paradoxically – the explicit diegetic *violation* of vision is frequently presented as being pleasurable for the viewer.

2.4 “Camera Violence”, Point-of-View Violation and (dis)Continuity

I would like to stress just how fundamental this idea of “violated vision” is to all of the *filone cycles* examined, despite the fact that diegetic acts of eye mutilation are by no means the norm in the films. A far more common trait – one of the most distinctive within the *filoni* – is the inclusion of point-of-view shots in scenes of violence where characters, objects, monsters, the glare of the sun and other “agents” seem to attack the camera itself. Many of the eye mutilation scenes already discussed, for example, add further emphasis to their diegetic eye violence by attempting to align the viewer's gaze with that of the victim: *Zombi 2*'s extreme splinter close-up, *Shanghai Joe*'s close-up of Joe punching the camera and *Opera*'s use of a point-of-view shot with needles masking the frame are all exponents of this method. Quite remarkably, however, even the many films that do *not* contain eye mutilations are equally

obsessed with presenting such violated point-of-view shots, which are deployed throughout the violent scenes of a significantly large number of the films examined. In her work on the *La maschera del demonio*, Jenks cites the “mask penetration” sequence discussed earlier in this chapter, labelling its violated point-of-view shots as an example of what she calls “textual sadism”, described as:

An extreme violence towards the audience, an aggressive desire to wound the very site of vision, the eye. The unspoken agreement of the cinematic contract is broken: the spiked mark of Satan is carried forward and into the camera to pierce the gaze of the spectator. There are then two further shots of the mask, but these are marked as being from the witch Asa’s point-of-view and punctuated by a reverse close-up of her huge-eyed terror. Asa is thus presented as the owner of a violated gaze, one which she shares with the spectator.
(1992, p.154)

Before going on to discuss this idea in greater detail, I would like to draw it out with some other examples. In a key scene from peplum *filone Sette contro tutti / Seven Rebel Gladiators* (Italy, Michele Lupo, 1965), the film’s seven heroes are pinned to a wall, arms outstretched in crucifixion poses, and whipped one by one by a cackling torturer. Yet again this act is performed in front of an audience of prison guards and mediated by a series of facial close-ups of the torturer’s enthusiastic face and the victims’ pained expressions, but as the torturer is shown whipping the seven gladiators he appears at several points to not only gaze directly into the centre of the frame but also to aim his whip at the same position, as if he were striking the camera. To take another example, the vigilante cop protagonist of *poliziotteschi Roma a mano armata / Rome, Armed to the Teeth* (Italy, Umberto Lenzi, 1976) beats a suspect up and shines a light in his eyes during an interrogation scene and – in similar fashion to *Mannaja*’s violated point-of-view shots during the “sunlight” torture – the film cuts to a shot of the bright light shining directly at the camera, briefly rendering it completely white and “blinding” the viewer in the process. A similar shot occurs in *La vendetta di Ercole*, which, amongst other fantastical set-pieces, features a scene where Eurito punishes a number of innocent prisoners by having his guards crucify them on X-shaped crosses, laying the crosses on the ground and letting a crazed elephant trample them to death. Quite pointedly, as the first of these executions is taking place Eurito’s adviser turns to him and says “He’s a beauty, that elephant, isn’t he.... great spectacle”, and the film does not disappoint in providing such spectacle by again

looking *away* from the act of violence. The film cuts from this shot of Eurito and his adviser to an extreme low angle un-cued point-of-view shot – presumably from the victim’s perspective – of the elephant looming over the camera, a facial close-up of another prisoner looking on in horror, then another low angle point-of-view shot of the elephant literally stepping onto the camera. Once again the viewer is encouraged to adopt, however briefly, the point-of-view of a victim of violence, though the lack of a facial close-up to cue these shots with diegetic character point-of-views creates a spatial confusion that seemingly displaces narrative questions such as “whose point-of-view is this?” and “does this shot create coherent spatial relations?” and foregrounds the far more salient “*how spectacular does this shot look?*”.

Such is the extent to which the *filoni* often revel in the violation of point-of-view continuities, in fact, that several films create overinvestment in their acts of violence by articulating *impossible* points-of-view to be attacked in violent scenes. By using the term “impossible”, I mean to suggest that these violated points-of-view exist completely outwith the characters of the diegesis and are thus completely illogical in terms of their narrative (dis)continuity. When a Mafia boss commands his hunting dogs to attack a businessman who has been cheating him in *poliziotteschi Il cinico l’infame il violento / The Cynic, the Rat and the Fist* (Italy, Umberto Lenzi, 1977), for example,³⁵ this act is prefaced by a brief second-long shot of the dogs “snapping” directly into the camera, despite the fact that at that precise moment they have not been released to attack. In horror *filone Apocalypse domani / Cannibal Apocalypse* (Italy / Spain, Antonio Margheriti, 1980), a crazed soldier runs amok, firing a flamethrower wildly around him, and at one point the film includes a low angle shot of the flamethrower firing directly into the camera itself, even though there are no characters in the scene whose point-of-view could be correlated to this camera angle and framing.³⁶ As is often the case with the other violent patterns discussed in this chapter, it is in the horror *filone* where such point-of-view violations enjoy greatest prominence: in the climactic scene of *Cannibal Ferox*, for example, one of the natives

³⁵ This act of violence in fact comes after yet another prolonged *filone* torture sequence, where the Mafia boss and his men tie the businessman up, sit him on the ground and begin to hit golf balls at his head while a number of onlookers (shown smiling in facial close-up) look on.

³⁶ A similar shot is included in science-fiction *filone 2019: Dopo la caduta di New York / 2019: After the Fall of New York* (Italy / France, Sergio Martino, 1983), where during a battle in a futuristic ghetto one of the characters is attempting to burst through a wall and is shown firing his flamethrower directly into the camera.

is running through the jungle and triggers a crude trap which spikes her through the chest, with this action being notably inflated through the use of a “point-of-view” shot of the spike being thrust towards the camera. Finally, and most disturbingly, *giallo Lo squartatore di New York / New York Ripper* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1982) includes a notorious scene of sexual violence where the film’s titular slasher-murderer kills a female sex show performer by sticking a broken bottle between her legs. This act is initially shown – like *Zombi 2*’s ocular mutilation – from a side-on medium shot of her hips, but the film then cuts to a graphic low angle close-up shot (presumably from between her legs) of the bottle being thrust into the camera and twisted around. Ensuing facial close-ups of the girl screaming in pain are intercut with reiterations of the side-on medium shot, but as the violence draws to a close there is another shot from the low angle, this time showing the bottle being withdrawn after having “stabbed” the camera.

Although such overtly stylised representations of violence would typically be examined by horror genre critics from a psychoanalytic perspective, I would like to suggest that these models are problematised by the *filone*’s violent scenes. While Jenks and other horror theorists such as Clover, Creed, and Hunt (who specifically focuses on Argento’s films) discuss such violent acts in terms of gendered gazes, the fact that violent acts in the *filone* typically work *against* coherent character-based point-of-view systems makes the question of exactly who in the narrative possesses the gaze somewhat immaterial. As I have illustrated, of more consequence in the violent scenes examined is the excessive spectacle created by a series of dramatic and spectacular perspectives that more often than not seem to effect a *collapse* of spatial and temporal continuities and, in the process, the point-of-view system itself. Few of these “point-of-view” shots described are formally cued as such by the films: there are no establishing or re-establishing shots, nor are the facial close-ups (when they are used) arranged around the point-of-view shots in a manner that would suggest they were point-of-view cues. Such shots in truth seem to come from “nowhere”, and with this in mind it is hard to speak confidently about identification with characters, gendered gazes, sadism or masochism when discussing a body of films that – as Chapter Five shall illustrate further – so frequently revel in the disavowal of logical narrative-based viewing positions. With this in mind, over the course of this thesis I would like to eschew the term “textual sadism” in favour of the less

psychoanalytically-loaded “camera violence”, which I feel to be a more productive term for describing such acts.

To summarise, a central distinguishing feature of the *filone* is the way in which it makes its violent acts more spectacular through the infliction of a kind of “violence” on the spatial continuities fundamental to its narrative scenes. This violence also extends to the *temporal* relations of the sequences, which are frequently distorted in the films to create overinvestment in the violent acts presented. A central means by which this occurs is through the use of *slow-motion cinematography* which, although not as widespread a device as the violated point-of-view shot, is common in a number of the *filoni*. In *Virus*, for example, one of the main characters shoots a zombie in the head: he fires the gun and the film then cuts to a close-up of the zombie’s head, the spectacle that this shot provides being increased by the use of slow-motion to literally elongate the time spent showing the bullet’s bloody impact. The same is true of a scene in *poliziotteschi La belva col mitra / Beast With a Gun* (Italy, Sergio Grieco, 1977), where the film’s eponymous “beast” villain, Nanni Vitale, beats up the husband of a woman who he has just sexually assaulted. Vitale repeatedly punches and kicks the man, who repeatedly falls down but keeps getting up to be beaten some more: as the man’s wounds become more severe Vitale eventually delivers the telling blow that kills him, an act signified by the use of slow-motion to draw out the spectacle of the man’s bloodied body falling to the ground.

Both of these slow-motion shots described are bookended by shots presented at normal speed, and the temporal disruption that they create is thus fairly minimal: indeed, the use of slow-motion shots like this is fairly common in mainstream action cinema. However, what is most notable here is the fact that slow-motion shots like this in the *filone* are frequently intercut and *paralleled* with normal speed shots to the point of incoherence. This can be best illustrated via an examination of another of *Zombi 2*’s more violent scenes, this time occurring when a zombie kills Susan, one of the main characters, by ripping her throat open with its teeth. The prelude to this act in fact displays a fascinating oscillation between the points-of-view of Susan and the zombie, with the latter at one point being seen to “bite” the camera itself, but of more import at this stage is the mixture of slow-motion and normal speed shots in the aftermath of the violence. In tight close-up the zombie pulls back from Susan’s neck

to reveal an open throat wound gushing with blood; a spectacle that is once again elongated via slow-motion. There is then a cut to a wider shot of the zombie continuing its backward motion while Susan slumps to the floor, but this shot is shown at normal speed. After a very brief and disorientating close-up of the zombie's head moving vertically into an empty frame, the film then cuts back to the slow-motion shot of Susan's gushing wound, then to a normal speed medium shot of her lifeless body quickly falling to the ground. The discontinuity that such a combination of shots and speeds creates is quite jarring: while the use of the crosscut would typically suggest that the two events portrayed (the zombie moving and Susan dying) were taking place at the same time and at the same speed, this sequence creates a completely illogical situation whereby Susan dies in slow-motion but the zombie moves at normal speed.

On the other hand, *Zombi 2*'s mixture of shot speeds is only absurd when evaluated in terms of its adherence to narrative continuities like this. If the editing of the sequence is considered with respect to the *potential for spectacle* that it provides, then the crosscuts presented make far more sense, for it is only when Susan is attacked and her suffering comes to the fore that the film literally slows down to focus on and overinvest in it. The zombie is never shown in slow-motion precisely because the zombie is not mutilated or in pain: Susan very much *is*, however, and the film draws out and overemphasises her suffering by literally slowing down the apparatus in order to allow the viewer ample time to savour the spectacle presented. This combination of slow-motion and normal speed shots can again be detected in a number of *filoni* of different cycles: in a memorable scene from horror *filone* *Incubo sulla città contaminata / Nightmare City* (Italy / Mexico / Spain, Umberto Lenzi, 1980), for example, a group of weapon-wielding "zombies" invade a television studio and attack a group of dancing girls during an on-air light entertainment programme. As the zombies burst into the studio, they are shown attacking the girls in normal speed but, initially, each time one of them chooses to beat, stab, bite or slash one of the girls, the resulting act is shown in slow-motion, with the movement of the onscreen characters speeding up and slowing down accordingly. An ambush scene in *Mannaja* takes on a similar structure: when a group of bandits massacre an innocent group of stagecoach passengers the film crosscuts between the massacre and a dance sequence that is taking place in a nearby town. While such crosscutting ostensibly works to establish

the fact that two different events are occurring simultaneously, the temporal relations of the sequence are again frustrated by the fact that many of the gunmen fire and many of the bodies fall in slow-motion, yet the “simultaneous” dance is shown at normal speed. While the way in which the dance sequence is filmed and the non-diegetic music accompanying it clearly mark it out as being spectacular, at this point in the film the emphasis is once again on suffering and its elongation through the use of slow-motion, regardless of the temporal discontinuity that results.

Moving on from the “violent” way in which the *filone*’s acts of violence are frequently depicted, I would like to conclude this chapter by discussing patterns of narrative structure in the films examined. As abundant as these acts of violence are in the *filone*, it is important to recognise that violence is but one recurring textual feature existing within a far larger tension between excess and narrative that typically changes and oscillates in emphasis as the films and plots progress.

2.5 Narrative (dis)Continuity

Although the Wagstaff quote cited in the previous chapter hinted at the apparent “interchangeability” of *filone* narratives, there nonetheless remain a fairly diverse range of plots which are common to each cycle discussed. The peplum, for example, chiefly trades in mythological narrative referents: gladiators; gods; monsters; strange races; superhuman feats; helpless princesses and heroic villains, each packaged up within plots that foreground male strength, heroism and derring-do. By contrast, the western presents variations on revenge and mercenary narratives, focusing on betrayal, money, greed, Mexican gangs and the American Civil War, while the *poliziotteschi* largely revolves around vigilante cops, corrupt governments, car chases, shootouts, drug deals and the Mafia. Even without considering the myriad of plot variants within the *giallo* and horror cycles it is clear that such narratives are by no means “interchangeable”, a fact wrought out by a number of fascinating recent narrative studies of individual *filone* cycles.³⁷ But while there is undoubtedly a level of diversity within the characters, settings and plots depicted by the cycles, such an

³⁷ Lagny’s (1992) study of the peplum, Koven’s (2006) examination of the *giallo* and Barry’s (2004) introduction to the *poliziotteschi* provide good examples of this.

observation misses the central point at hand here, namely the idea that all of the *filone* narratives presented are bound together by their frequently arbitrary nature and the subservient relation to excess within the films that they display.

The “weakening” of narrative in the *filone* is another of the films’ formal aspects which rose, at least initially, from the specific industrial conditions surrounding the films. For one, the *filone* producers’ obsession with seriality entailed that characters’ names within the diegeses of the films were less important than the names that could be used to increase profit *outside* them, with the *Django* “series” of western *filoni* illustrating this quite effectively. As the previous chapter’s discussion of “misrepresenting” film titles suggested, the central character of *Pochi dollari per Django / Some Dollars for Django* (Italy / Spain, León Klimovsky, 1966) is known as “Regan” in the film and is rarely referred to by name. Furthermore, in truth “dollars” have absolutely no importance to the plot whatsoever, which follows Regan and his accomplice Jim (a bounty-killer who collects no bounty) as they attempt to bring law and order to a frontier town ruled by a gang of corrupt ranchers: *Pochi dollari per Django* is a film shaped by *lire* rather than dollars.

Such discrepancies illustrate a general weakening of character and agency across all of the cycles examined, and a sense that such narrative devices as characterisation, suspense and motivation are less important than spectacle pervades throughout. Peplum *Le fatiche di Ercole*³⁸ / *Hercules* (Italy / Spain, Pietro Francisci, 1958) gives a sense of the *filone* narratives’ habitually convoluted nature: although the film is ostensibly based on the mythical character of Hercules and his twelve labours, in truth he is not given any formal “labours” to undertake by the ruler of the city in which he arrives. Among the spectacles of superhuman strength and bravery that the film foregrounds are scenes where Hercules wrestles and kills a lion and a bull: actions which could loosely be linked to two of the original labours (killing the Nemean lion and capturing the Cretan Bull). Yet these are the only “labours” that the film depicts: a strange decision, given its title’s stress on the labours themselves, and one that is rendered even more illogical when halfway through the film Hercules decides to lead Jason and the Argonauts on the search for the Golden Fleece. *Le fatiche* takes over

³⁸ Translated as “The Labours of Hercules”.

three quarters of an hour to introduce this “central” quest; no sooner has it begun, though, than it is interrupted by a twenty-five minute-long digressional scene in which Hercules, Jason and the others travel to an island and meet and comedically flirt with a tribe of Amazon women. By this stage in the film Jason has become the central protagonist, with Hercules demoted to ancillary narrative status until the end of the film, where he is chained to a pillar by the film’s villain and responds by tearing the pillars of the palace down in a reiteration of the biblical Samson myth, another of *Le fatiche*’s excessive intertextual “borrowings”.

To discuss *Le fatiche* in narrative terms is to decidedly miss the “point” of what the film – and the other *filoni* in general – typically offer the viewer, which is a set of excessive and habitually violent spectacles presented within a “formally bizarre” narrative structure that often provides no more than the most basic means of deploying and linking them. As a result, another aspect of the typical *filone*’s narrative is its deeply *episodic* nature, where a number of typically short narrative sequences “pad out” more important scenes of spectacle and violence. Once again the industrial context of these films becomes important, for although a number of the *filoni* were made for export, as Wagstaff notes they were generally made with the Italian *terza visione* cinemas in mind. While the bulk of the arguments presented by this thesis are concerned with my own experience of viewing the *filoni* rather than speculating on the viewing habits of Italian audiences of the time, Wagstaff’s work on the typical Italian cinemagoer provides a useful context for the episodic structure of the films. Mainstream genre films, he argues, are typically conceived of as “whole” films where narrative cohesion and unity are prioritised throughout. The Italian westerns, however – and by extension, the other *filoni* – instead function as a series of often dislocated “physiological moments”, where “peaks” of audience involvement (“thrills”, “comedy” or “titillation” are the “payoffs” Wagstaff mentions) are contrasted with “troughs” of arbitrary dialogue and narrative, where typical *terza visione* audiences would chat to each other and move around until they were actively solicited by the film into paying attention to more upcoming spectacles (1992, p.253). This idea is also put forward by Koven, who argues that “within the *terza visione* cinema culture, the film text was of less importance than generally ‘going to the pictures’, a context for social interaction rather than textual contemplation” (2006, p.27).

The *filone*'s episodic nature is typically marked by its frequent infliction of “violence” on the cuts between its scenes: sequences begin in close-up or with contextualising crash zooms, pans or tilts, often *in medias res* during acts of violence, and typical establishing, re-establishing and shot-reverse-shot patterns are largely eschewed in favour of presenting such “dramatic” shots at the beginnings and endings of scenes. The loud music, screaming and sound effects that accompany many of the *filone*'s spectacles frequently cut out instantly without fade or transition as if they have been physically spliced along with the images, forming instant sound cliffs that make the divisions between scenes even more obvious. For example, the opening pre-credits sequence of *Il cinico l'infame il violento* – a fifteen second-long portrayal of thief stealing a woman's handbag and jumping onto his accomplice's getaway motorbike – begins with a high-angle close-up of the motorbike's undercarriage which quickly tilts upwards to reveal the thief on the bike and his accomplice's leg. The film then cuts to a fast zoom out and tilt down from the Rome skyline to reveal the woman walking towards the screen, the thief waiting for her in the foreground of the shot. As she walks towards the camera, the thief grabs her bag, pushes her over and jumps on the bike as the camera quickly pans right to follow his progress. As the thieves speed off the camera cuts to a medium shot from behind the bike, showing it speeding off into the distance, and as a passer-by walks across the camera – completely blacking-out the frame – the film cuts to a series of white titles against a black backdrop.

What immediately stands out from this sequence is the sheer kineticism that its three shots display: with the exception of a two-second period at the end of the sequence the camera is constantly moving (either physically or internally via lens movement), and even this brief moment of stasis is quickly interrupted by the ostentatious act of blacking out the screen completely – another one of the instances where the *filone* actively looks away from or obscures the view of an event to further increase its effect. The scene also begins and ends with movement and *in medias res*, further emphasising the joins between scenes and the switch from spectacular to narrative priorities that can be discretely traced throughout the rest of the film. One scene ends when the film's protagonist, Inspector Tanzi (played by Maurizio Merli), smashes a pile of terracotta tiles with a baton to test the weapon before attempting to break into a criminal hideout; the camera zooms into a facial close-up of his enraged expression then cuts to another close-up of the tiles being smashed by the baton. No sooner have

the tiles been smashed than the film cuts to another similarly stylised shot, this time a skewed medium shot of a the girl who a group of villains are about to inject with heroin. The camera rapidly pulls focus back from the girl's face to reveal a large hypodermic syringe being squirted in the foreground: it then quickly zooms out and pans left to reveal that the original image presented was in fact a reflection of the girl in a mirror. It is only then, after this heavily stylised and disorientating series of rapid camera movements, that the narrative points of the film can be conveyed through dialogue: in the ensuing shots the camera remains stationary while eyeline matches, reverse shots and other continuity editing devices emerge to turn the viewer's attention to the plot, rather than the manipulation of the camera.

This does not mean that the cross-cut between the "tile-smashing" and "heroin den" scenes renders the narrative illogical. Although there is initially some confusion between the two spaces, the heroin injection is interrupted by the arrival of Tanzi, who knocks the door, barges in, beats up the villains and rescues the girl: cutting between the scenes in this way establishes clear temporal relations between the two events. Yet while most mainstream films would preserve continuity by making the joins between the two sequences as inconspicuous as possible, *Il cinico l'infame il violento* places such a great emphasis on the cut between them that it momentarily seems to draw attention to its own constructedness, laying bare in the process the workings of the apparatus and the "material identity" of the film prized by the paracinematic aesthetic. This is further accentuated by the use of music and sound effects across the cut: in the first scene as Tanzi picks up the baton there is a slow reiteration of the film's theme, and as he clutches his chest in pain (he was shot in an earlier scene), there is a zoom into his face that is accompanied on the soundtrack by two louder synthesiser "stabs"; the last of these stabs sustains and builds up tension, before quickly dropping out to allow the smashing sound of the tiles a dominance within the film's sonic hierarchy. The next scene begins in total silence, further emphasising the contrast with the loud and stylised shots that preceded it: this is by no means a smooth transition in narrative terms, but at the same time it is hard to deny how spectacular such a dextrous combination of edits is upon viewing the film.

To conclude this section, I would like to illustrate how the *filone's* episodic structure is habitually used to emphasise scenes of *non-violent* spectacle that often almost

completely delay narrative progression at the behest of purely visual pleasure. In fact, just as the *filone* employs drawn-out scenes of torture, mutilation and suffering for spectacular effect, so too does it utilise an array of narrative delays and stases to interrupt the dialogue-driven scenes. One central means of doing this, particularly in the *poliziotteschi*, is through the inclusion of “chase” sequences where characters pursue each other in the film: *Uomini si nasce poliziotti si muore*, for example, includes a six minute-long motorcycle chase through Rome; *La belva col mitra* begins with a prison break followed by a protracted car chase along the Italian coast; the hero of *Roma a Mano Armata* also chases a thief in the film’s opening reel, and a bank robbery in *Milano trema – la polizia vuole giustizia / Violent Professionals* (Italy, Sergio Martino, 1973) is followed by a drawn-out police pursuit.

This is not to argue that the chase sequence does not feature just as prominently within mainstream genres, though: films such as *Bullitt* (USA, Peter Yates, 1969), *The Italian Job* (UK, Peter Collinson, 1969) and *The Blues Brothers* (USA, John Landis, 1980) prioritise a number of elongated and spectacular chase scenes within their structures (the latter of which purposely strays into the realms of absurdity and discontinuity for comedic effect). Yet while these sequences typically work to advance the plots surrounding them, and present their own internal spatial and temporal continuities, the *filone* chase sequence presents a handy structural device allowing various spectacles to be presented under the pretence of narrative advancement. Once a film has established that a character is being tortured or being chased, there are no real limits on how much time it can spend overinvesting in a character’s suffering, the thrill of a chase or even such abstract spectacles as the face of the hard-boiled male cop; the tyres of a powerful motorcycle; the streets of Rome or the flashing blue lights of a squad car. Moreover, these scenes are not merely confined to the *poliziotteschi*: the western *Mannaja*, for example, includes a central “chase” when a stagecoach is pursued and held up by a gang of thieves; *Cannibal Holocaust* (Italy, Ruggero Deodato, 1980) presents a chase scene where the film’s protagonists are chased through the jungle by natives, and in *I nuovi barbari* a number of bandits chase a group of futuristic desert settlers in their armed dune buggies. In addition, such scenes are almost invariably accompanied by music, which seems to only add further emphasis to the spectacles that they present.

While these chase sequences, however drawn-out, remain at least partially rooted in the narratives containing them, many of the *filoni* include spectacular digressions where narrative is almost completely paused and deprioritised. *Mannaja* elongates a journey made by its protagonist in the final third of the film to focus on the spectacle provided by shots of his face, his horse and the western landscape, but also uses the sequence to showcase the pop song that accompanies these shots. *La vendetta di Ercole* includes a brief sequence where a female dancer sways provocatively around a fire; an act rendered more spectacular by the lack of establishing shot, the use of exotic Arabian music on the soundtrack and the combination of central framings and a slow camera track towards her as she faces the camera. Finally, *Virus* includes an absurd scene where one of its protagonists – a female anthropologist – decides to befriend a tribe of natives by stripping naked, covering her body in paint and wandering into their village. In a scene drawing heavily on the *mondo* cycle of films, close-ups of her face are intercut with “point-of-view” shots, the majority of which are clearly taken directly from documentary films. Shots of cadavers, footage of natives killing animals; pregnant villagers and funeral pyres – all of obviously varying stock quality, shot ratio and brightness – are cut together with facial close-ups of the anthropologist looking off the frame, completely displacing spatial and temporal continuities in the process. For nine minutes, *Virus* almost completely abandons its central narrative, instead providing a series of exotic spectacles that delay resolution in its plot and illustrate the often uneasy relationship between spectacle and narrative in the *filoni* examined.

2.6 Conclusion

Having provided this introductory analysis of the films and introduced some key sequences that shall be revisited in later chapters, I would like to conclude by concentrating my findings into three central hypotheses, to be illustrated, challenged and revised in the analysis chapters that follow. Summarising the central aspects of spectacle and violence in the *filone* in this manner will allow these chapters to be structured in a way that addresses these claims and points towards their re-evaluation in my conclusion. With this in mind, I would like to begin by presenting the three claims on the following page:

i) The filone's narrative structure is defined by its frequent inability to contain and regulate scenes of spectacle, and during such scenes narration becomes incoherent and discontinuous, to the detriment of plot, character-based point-of-view, suspense and other storytelling devices;

ii) The filone is typically marked by its overinvestment in violent acts and almost unfailingly places a far greater emphasis – via specific recurring interactions of mise-en-scène, editing and soundtrack – on the visual and sonic rather than the narrative pleasures presented by these acts;

iii) During scenes of violence and spectacle the filone characteristically instigates “games of spectatorship” where, paradoxically, the spectacle of the acts presented is intensified by looking away from them, obscuring them, inscribing a “violence” on the camera or creating violence from the apparatus itself.

Clearly, illustrating and interrogating the validity of these hypothetical claims will require a closer and more specific analysis of the *filoni* that make up my central corpus of study. Before moving on to do this, however, I would like firstly to pose the question of what theoretical models are best suited to shed light on the typically violent excesses identified by these findings.

Chapter Three

Theorising Excess and Violence in the *Filone*

3.1 Introduction

When faced with the task of theorising the ways in which violence, spectacle and narrative interact in the *filone*, perhaps the central challenge that emerges is one that I have already alluded to; namely the fact that very little critical literature exists on the “generic traits” of the *filoni* as a whole. While a growing body of work – chiefly psychoanalytic in nature – has been dedicated to the study of the *giallo* and horror cycles, at the time of writing there exist no studies which explicitly address narrative structure, spectacle or violence and their function(s) within the films. Much of this is evidently due to the common (and somewhat lazy) assumption that, as mere parasitic “facsimiles” of American originals – that which Dyer and Vincendeau label “Hollywood in foreign dress” (1992, p.11) – the *filoni* are simply not worth examining on their own terms. Yet as Dyer and Vincendeau also note and my own findings have illustrated, the structures and priorities of these films are vastly different to the mainstream genre films that they are often accused of imitating. While the focus of this thesis is resolutely trained on the *filoni* and the theoretical issues that they provoke rather than their simple similarity or dissimilarity to mainstream cinema, this does not mean that Anglo-American theories of narrative, spectatorship and violence are without use. In fact, as this chapter seeks to illustrate, Anglo-American criticisms of early cinema can prove to be of far more use than the comparatively small volume of accounts that discusses the *filone* itself.

The task at hand, then, is to consider which theoretical models are best suited to explain the patterns of violence and spectacle identified by the previous chapter’s findings. The first section begins this process by introducing a strand of *structuralist* theory prompted by my recurring use of the terms “overinvestment” and “spectacle”, and sets out to develop the paracinematic approach of this thesis by evaluating the usefulness of Thompson’s (1986) term “cinematic excess” as a more specific means of examining the *filone*’s structure. With the language that is used to describe the *filone* so frequently alluding towards the excessive nature of violence and spectacle in the films, this provides a useful entry-point into the formal processes that are at work

within the *filoni*'s structures. Building on the work of this section, the second part of my chapter seeks to examine some of the literature on early silent cinema, the predominantly exhibitionistic nature of which appears to provide a useful parallel with the similarly "showy" films that make up my corpus of study.³⁹ By engaging with Gunning's work in this area I wish to assess how helpful his concept of cinematic "attractions" is in explaining the paracinematic moments where spectacle and violence threaten narrative stability and reveal the films' "material identity"; a process engrained in the early one-shot films that he discusses. Harnessing this theory to my own field of study will also allow me to further investigate the ways in which the viewer is positioned by such instances in the films, and to provide a central analytical tool for Chapter Five's work on *filone* spectatorship.

Before moving on to do this, however, the third section of this chapter seeks to highlight the problems inherent in using such a loaded term as "violence" in discussions of cinema. By scrutinising some of the ways in which the term is used (and misused) in debates on violence in the media, I aim to draw on the work of the previous sections and explicitly formulate my *own* definition of "film violence" that incorporates not only the *filone*'s diegetic acts of violence but also the *non-diegetic* "violence" that is foregrounded in its numerous scenes of camera violence and overinvested spectacle. The chapter then concludes with an examination of some of the literature on violence in mainstream film genres: by concentrating on the ways in which violence is both talked and not talked about in genre criticism I plan to qualify and underline the importance of my textual analysis-based approach to the *filone*. Care shall be taken throughout the chapter to reflect how the theories and films examined began to "talk" to each other during the study process, and, having introduced and briefly analysed a number of *filone* in the previous chapter, I shall revisit some key examples to illustrate how certain aspects of the films led me to certain theories, and vice-versa. Narrowing my definitional scope and clarifying the

³⁹ Tellingly, the suggestion that criticisms of early cinema may be of use when examining *non-mainstream* cinemas is also put forward by Dyer and Vincendeau, who propose an avenue of research focusing on "forms that derive from the most 'low-brow' types of popular entertainment. These are often discussed in terms of their formal differences from classical narrative cinema: their emphasis on the 'spectacular', their hybrid, disunified, aesthetically as well as ideologically contradictory nature. [...] The implication may be that, compared with classical narrative cinema, such popular European cinema is less subjected to the disciplines of verisimilitude, generic unity and a rigorous regard for coherence, relating it to the aesthetics of 'primitive' cinema" (1992, p.12).

terms of analysis will therefore clear essential ground for the more detailed analyses to follow.

3.2 Cinematic Excess and Spectacle

Variations of the term “excess” occur with regularity when examining academic accounts of the *filone*. Mary Wood, for example, describes the Italian western’s “unmotivated and excessive hyper-violence” (2005, pp. 55-56); Jenks’ discussion of the horror *filone* lays particular stress on “the excessive violence of [the murder] as spectacle” (1992, p.150) and Nowell-Smith, Hay and Volpi identify the central traits of the same cycle as being “excess and violence” (1996, p.17). Even when the word “excess” is not being used by critics, its inference is still tacit in the terms with which the *filoni* have traditionally been characterised: “brutal”, “sadistic”,⁴⁰ “hyper-violent”, “extreme” and “unmotivated”. *The Oxford English Dictionary* provides a useful definition of the term “excess”, cited below:

The action of overstepping (a prescribed limit), going beyond (one’s authority, rights, etc.) [...] an extravagant violation of law, decency, or morality; outrageous conduct. [...] the state of exceeding or being in greater quantity or degree than is usual or necessary; exuberance, superabundance; [...] an extreme degree or amount.

(Oxford University Press 2008)

Though often hyperbolic and unsubstantiated in their descriptions of the *filoni*, there is at the very least a kernel of truth in the use of such terms to describe the films, for as the previous chapter noted they are marked by what I have labelled an overinvestment in and emphasis on violence and spectacle, frequently overstepping, violating or exceeding the prescribed limits of narrative signification. With this in mind, I would like to develop a specific definition of *film* excess to help clarify and illuminate the approach to narrative that my analyses propose, beginning with Barthes and his own perspectives on meaning in cinema.

⁴⁰ Of course, the majority of these accounts are content to use the term “sadism” as a byword for “excessive violence” rather than within its proper psychological context.

In *Image, Music, Text*, Barthes argues that filmic and literary texts are not homogenous and unified entities, but rather “multi-dimensional” spaces where a variety of sub-texts “blend and clash” (1977, p.146). With specific reference to *Ivan the Terrible* (USSR, Sergei Eisenstein, 1944), he suggests that the volume of information generated by the film’s visual content cannot completely be harnessed by narrative structure, the materiality of the image itself creating what he labels the “third” – or “obtuse” – meaning (1977, p.54). Analysing a number of stills from Eisenstein’s film, Barthes illustrates how the filmic image presents two fundamental meanings: the “informational” (that which the mise-en-scène of the frame tells us about its physical content) and the “symbolic” (namely, what this content *signifies* in terms of the diegesis). Both of these meanings, he argues, are absolutely essential to the process of narration: the viewer firstly sees what happens within the frame and then relates these visual changes to underlying developments in a film’s narrative world. At the same time as this process is taking place, however, Barthes proposes that the frame and its contents present an *excessive*, “obtuse” meaning that is superfluous to – and thus a threat to the cohesion and homogeneity of – the diegesis itself:

The obtuse meaning is clearly counternarrative itself. Diffused, reversible, caught up in its own time, it can, if one follows it, establish only another script that is distinct from the shots, sequences and syntagmas [...]. You will not have another temporality, diegetic nor oneiric, you will have another film.

(1977, p.66)

The “script” created by Barthes’ obtuse meaning therefore results from all of the elements of the frame that are deemed excessive to the film’s narration: to illustrate this he refers to the recurring shots in Eisenstein’s film of the “wicked mother” character, focusing on “that grimace, that black veil, the heavy, ugly, dullness of that skin” (1977, p.66). Such is the extent to which her face is stylised as haggard, repulsive and evil, Barthes’ argument infers, that the viewer begins to focus more on the abstract visual qualities of the mise-en-scène – and the film’s “material identity” that Sconce refers to – than on its relationship to the diegesis where Ivan, the wicked mother and other characters are contained. It is precisely when the viewer’s attention is drawn to these qualities, he argues, that “the ‘filmic’ finally emerges” (1977, p.65).

This seems a practical way of theorising the specific type of excess that my study of the films has identified, for on watching the violent and spectacular shots (and combinations of shot) analysed in the previous chapter, a distinct feeling arises that they are often *so* violent, and *so* spectacular that any narrative meaning they possess is marginalised. To build on this argument, I would like to introduce Kristin Thompson's work, which seeks to develop Barthes' concept of obtuse meaning by transfiguring it to what she calls "*cinematic excess*". Offering her own reading of the spectatorial moment described in *Ivan the Terrible*, Thompson argues that:

The minute a viewer begins to notice style for its own sake or watch works which do not provide such thorough motivation, excess comes forward and must affect narrative meaning.
(1986, p.132)

This quote, in fact, draws some useful parallels with Guback's criticism of the *filoni* that opened Chapter One, for the central accusations that he levels at these films is their "directorial slickness", which "[deflects] attention from reality" and therefore empties them of any "cultural" significance (1969, p.199). What is immediately entertaining about these films *is* their directorial slickness, and the effect that this has on weakening the viewing pleasure of immersion in a film's narrative world. As Thompson notes, typically this type of excess implies "a gap or lag in motivation" (1986, p.58) and threatens the unity that she argues is essential to the mainstream film, within which narrative cohesion is specifically maintained through the *regulation* of excess:

[The classical Hollywood film] typically strives to minimise excess by a thoroughgoing motivation. Other films outside this tradition do not always try to provide an apparent motivation for everything in the film, and thus they leave their potentially excessive elements more noticeable.

(1986, pp.54-55)

Already links between this perspective and my own findings are beginning to emerge: the idea, proposed in the last chapter, that the *filone*'s narrative is often threatened by a disproportionate emphasis on spectacle could in fact be more productively theorised by replacing "spectacle" with "cinematic excess". Excess meaning may be present throughout a film, but it is only when excess is not properly regulated by narrative

that spectacle is created. In using the terms “spectacle” and “spectacular” throughout the following chapters, I am drawing on the work of Polan, who argues that:

The offer of spectacle is exactly that of a breakdown of coherence, a disordering of orders (political, diegetic, whatever) for the sake of visual show.

(1986, p58-59)

To clarify, I am not trying to argue here that spectacle always results in a complete breakdown of narrative continuity: merely to highlight the fact that “spectacle” relates to specifically *visual* pleasures that, if emphasised enough within a film, can draw attention to themselves to the extent of undermining their narrative purpose.

Mainstream genre films are frequently labelled “excessive” and are habitually praised for the “spectacles” that they provide, which can range from explosions and gunfights to far less violent elements, for example the panoramic shots of American landscapes popularised in films such as *Shane* (USA, George Stevens, 1952). The snow-capped Wyoming hills of Stevens’ film – framed symmetrically in extreme long shot and set against the blue skies – provide a spectacle, but not to the extent that they reveal the apparatus, divert the viewer’s attention from the film’s plot and undermine narrative continuity. In the *filone*, however, these spectacles are so *excessive* that their function in terms of establishing space, point-of-view and time is almost completely lost. To illustrate this, I would like to refer to some of the films introduced in the previous chapter and suggest what makes their spectacles “excessive”. A torturer whips the camera; a dramatic focus pull reveals a hypodermic syringe in close-up; the camera literally slows down to lengthen the spectacle of a body falling to the ground – each of these actions conveys a degree of narrative information, but the extent to which they are so heavily *stylised* (and characterised by “slickness”) renders them excessive. Plainly put, there is no narrative “need” for the focus pull to be so dramatic, for the whip to “hit” the camera or for the body to fall in slow-motion, but it is precisely in these excessive moments where the most pleasurable aspects of the sequences are drawn.

The idea of the excess script as being something that narrative has to constantly *regulate* is also taken up by Mellencamp in her work on the musical: she notes that the archetypal mainstream narrative structures itself around the basic repression of excessive filmic aspects, “[overlying and containing] the revelation of the

mechanism's operations" (1977, p.28). Cinematic excess is thus present to some extent in practically every shot from every film ever made; a direct result of the apparatus and the inherently artificial and constructed nature of filmic space and time. Within the mainstream film, however, which has evolved since early cinema as a fundamentally *storytelling* medium, excess (and, crucially, the *narrative ambiguity* it creates) has to be regulated in order to prioritise plot, character, story and narrative realism; as Bordwell, Thompson and Staiger note, "Because we see no gaps, we never question the narration, hence never question its source." (1985, p.57).

3.3 Gunning's "Cinema of Attractions"

Such arguments raise the question of exactly what processes are at work when the spectacles of the films examined become excessive. In searching for relevant literature that offers useful ways of answering this question, examining some of the prevailing work on silent cinema may at first appear baffling. In truth, however, the *filone* is often remarkably analogous to the "pre-narrative" films made before 1908:⁴¹ "actuality" films; factory shots; panoramas; train films – that which Gunning labels the "cinema of attractions" (1986, p.64). Both, for example, work to rectify the absence (or weakness, in the case of the multi-lingual and uniformly dubbed Italian films) of an authoritative, "authentic" dialogue track. Both consequently foreground an emphasis on stylised *mise-en-scène*, editing and visual display often surpassing the boundaries of plot, story and cohesion. Finally, and most significantly, both early silent cinema and the *filone* are – to use Gunning's terminology – "willing to rupture a self-enclosed fictional world for a chance to solicit the attention of the spectator" (1986, p.64), through the presentation of spectacle. The defining motivation for these silent films, then, is one which regards cinema:

[...] less as a way of telling stories than as a way of presenting a series of views to an audience, fascinating because of their illusory power and exoticism.

(1986, p.64)

⁴¹ Gunning stresses 1908 as a rough date where storytelling began to enter the silent film medium: "While storytelling is not totally foreign to cinema before the nickelodeon boom (1905-1909), a number of apparent stylistic anomalies and an often radically different mode of exhibition lead us in another direction" (1993).

In making this comparison, of course, I am not trying to delineate the *filone* as an absolute cinema of attractions, for the fact remains that the films examined are all ostensibly examples of narrative cinema, regardless of how tenuous and convoluted their narrative structures often are. Nevertheless, theorising the frequent moments of spectacle that punctuate the *filoni* as discrete “attractions” seems to provide a useful insight into the relationship that they set up between film and viewer.

What, then, is at stake for the viewer of the attraction in cinema? Centrally, implicit throughout Gunning’s work is the suggestion that it is precisely the *solicitation* of the viewer by the text that signals a specific aspect of a film’s form as an attraction. In a later article examining temporality in the cinema of attractions, he makes this point clear:

As a new way of approaching early cinema, attractions foreground the role of the spectator. Cinematic attractions can be defined as formal devices within early film texts. However, they can only be thoroughly understood if these devices are conceived as addressing spectators in a specific manner. This unique spectatorial address defines the cinema of attractions and its difference from the classically-constructed spectatorial address of later narrative cinema.
(1993)

Gunning’s suggestion that attractions are created by a distinct mode of *address* in cinema appears to harmonise with my own findings, for as the previous chapter illustrated there are frequent points in the *filone* where the viewer is made explicitly aware – through discontinuity, camera violence and the spectacles discussed – of the fictiveness of narrative unity and ensuing visibility of the apparatus. Furthermore, a key feature of the paracinematic aesthetic noted by Hawkins is the films’ emphasis on images that are “direct” to the extent of robbing them of metaphorical significance (2000, p.32), a point alluded to in my introduction. A productive way of theorising this is provided by the “scripts” that Barthes alludes to in his “obtuse meaning” argument: these moments seemingly arise from the revelation of the “excess script” of the films, when the viewer becomes aware of the apparatus – the film’s “material identity” – which, before this script was revealed by spectacle, was invisible. In contrast to this, the narrative script seeks to immerse the viewer in the diegesis by *concealing* the apparatus and all the marks of its enunciation, refusing to acknowledge the presence of the viewer in the process. As Gunning argues, “the classical diegesis

depends not only on certain basic elements of coherence and stability, but also on the lack of acknowledgement of the spectator” (1993). In contrast to this, he continues, the revelation of and emphasis on a film’s excess script results in the viewer being *confronted* by the film:

The attraction directly addresses the spectator, acknowledging the viewer’s presence and seeking to quickly satisfy a curiosity. This encounter can even take on an aggressive aspect, as the attraction confronts audiences and even tries to shock them (the onrushing locomotive which seems to threaten the audience is early cinema’s most enduring example).

(1993)

This idea of direct address creating “aggression” against the viewer is useful in unlocking the processes at work during the scenes of camera violence that pervade the *filoni* examined. When an elephant tramples the camera, a flamethrower engulfs it in flames, a broken bottle lacerates it or a splinter penetrates it, these are all examples of such address, for in each instance it is the *viewer* rather than the characters of the diegesis who is being addressed and, ultimately, “violated” by the film. Such shots represent the most overt and “pure” attractions that the *filone* presents, and in fact recall some of the more memorable attractions from the silent films that Gunning examines; notably *L’arrivée d’un train à la Ciotat / Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat* (France, Auguste and Louis Lumière, 1895) – where the “onrushing locomotive” described “hits” the screen in a sequence that he describes as “a direct assault on the spectator” (1986, p.70) – and *The Great Train Robbery* (USA, Edwin S. Porter, 1903), where a cowboy fires his pistol directly into the screen, described by Carter and Weaver as “the cinema’s first act of truly gratuitous brutality” (2003, p.43).

I have already identified camera violence as one of the *filone*’s most over “direct address” spectacles, but the question arises of how direct address can create attractions in shots where the camera is *not* attacked. How, for example, do the slow-motion “zombie ambush” violence in *Incubo sulla città contaminata / Nightmare City* (Italy / Mexico / Spain, Umberto Lenzi, 1980), the extreme close-up of blood gushing out of a crucified man’s wrist wound in *L’aldilà / The Beyond* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1981) or *Il cinico*’s rapid hypodermic needle focus pull present the viewer with attractions? To answer this question requires a closer look at the process of

“solicitation” that is inherent in the attraction itself, the methods by which, as

Gunning notes:

Through a variety of formal means, the images of the cinema of attractions rush forward to meet their viewers [...]. This cinema addresses and holds the spectator, emphasising the act of display.
(1989, p.825)

Although Gunning does not in his original article talk explicitly or at length on the subject of exactly what these formal means are, in a paragraph added when the essay was republished in Elsaesser and Barker’s 1990 anthology *Early Cinema: Space-Frame-Narrative* he is far clearer on the process of how attractions are created. Firstly, an attraction can be created by presenting “a unique event, whether fictional or documentary, that is of interest in itself”; an idea that echoes Gunning’s argument (quoted earlier) identifying *powerful, exotic views* as a key aspect of this mode of address. A number of sequences from the *filone* seem to epitomise this type of attraction, particularly in the more fantastical peplum, horror and western cycles. The spectacles created by watching a zombie impale a woman’s eye on a splinter; seeing a man with his severed ear between his teeth; looking at stock footage of primitive native rituals; watching Goliath jump onto and wrestle a real elephant⁴² – each of these provides a novel and exotic event that creates an attraction in itself. However, of more interest here are the ways in which events that do not necessarily need to be exotic or powerful are rendered so by the way in which the film *presents them* to the viewer. Gunning’s second type of attraction is thus described as “of a cinematic nature”; a point he illustrates by referring to close-ups in early cinema and “trick films in which a cinematic manipulation (slow-motion, reverse motion, substitution, multiple exposure) provide the film’s novelty” (Gunning 1990, pp.58-59). These attractions are created by *the apparatus itself* and the ways in which it is manipulated, and once again this perspective is very useful in highlighting exactly what is spectacular about the patterns identified in the films examined.

Taking Gunning’s argument into account, there are three prevalent types of attraction presented by the *filoni*. The first and least “cinematic” of these occurs when, as in *La vendetta di Ercole*’s elephant wrestle, the stock native footage in *Virus / Hell of the*

⁴² This fascinating stunt occurs in *La vendetta di Ercole / Goliath and the Dragon* (Italy / France, Vittorio Cottafavi, 1960) immediately after the “trampling” executions described.

Living Dead (Italy, Bruno Mattei, 1983) or the burning coal torture of *Teseo contro il minotauro / The Minotaur* (Italy, Silvio Amadio, 1961), the literal content of the frame is enough to constitute an exotic attraction in itself. These events are accordingly shown in mainly long shot and without noticeably stylised editing: no “extra work” is required to present them as attractions. The second type occurs when the already-spectacular nature of the frame’s contents are rendered even *more* spectacular (and consequently presented as an attraction) by manipulation of shot ratio, camera angle, editing, film speed, focus, zoom, pan and – perhaps most intriguingly, given that Gunning does not discuss it – soundtrack. Once again, the ocular mutilation from *Zombi 2 / Zombie Flesh Eaters* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1979) perhaps best illustrates this process, where the power and exoticism of watching someone’s eyeball being penetrated is further emphasised by the use of the extreme close-up (itself quite an “exotic” shot ratio in cinema), the loud “squish” on the soundtrack (and progressive rock synth track that it quickly displaces on the soundtrack) and the reiteration of direct address camera violence. It is hard, in fact, to imagine a scene from any of the other *filoni* that has been so deviously crafted to maximise its spectatorial impact, and as a result *Zombi 2*’s scene provides a practical archetype for the intensification of attractions through manipulation of the apparatus.

Far more common in the films examined, however, is the third and most “cinematic type” of attraction presented, which involves typically “ordinary” or banal frame contents (a conversation, a character’s face or a police siren, for example) being presented as attractions by the visual and aural manipulations described in the last paragraph. *Il cinico*’s “needle” shot, for example – a quick focus pull from the girl to the needle and subsequent zoom out and pan left to reveal the origins of the shot in a mirror – creates an attraction from a girl’s face, a needle and a mirror. While a similar narrative sequence in a typical mainstream film would begin with an establishing long shot or similar shot designed to create spatial relations in the sequence, *Il cinico* instead presents a discrete attraction created by the revelation and foregrounding of the apparatus itself: such a stylised combination of focus pulling, lens manipulation and camera movement serves to temporarily disrupt spatial relations and literally “flip” the frame on its vertical axis using the mirror, the effect of which is completely disorientating. The same is true of the frequent facial close-ups that recur throughout the *filoni*: although the facial close-up is in itself a very common aspect of mainstream

cinema's narration, the fact that more commonly than not the *filone* uses it outwith any character-based point-of-view or identification system – and in a fragmented manner where it is not logically pre-empted by a shot showing the rest of the character's body – creates discontinuity and therefore reveals the excess script of the film.

While Chapter Five shall discuss the varying attractions that the *filone* creates in greater detail, for now I would like to stress that this third type of attraction offers an intriguing explanation for some of the “games of spectatorship” introduced in the last chapter, at the same time helping to explain exactly what is “violent” about the way in which violence is portrayed in the *filone*. For every violent act that is explicitly shown taking place within the frame – the blowtorch to the face in *Luca il contrabbandiere / The Naples Connection* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1980), for example, or the moment in shark attack *filone L'ultimo squalo / The Last Shark* (Italy, Enzo Girolami, 1981) where a shark tears off a character's the lower torso – there is another sequence in another *filone* where the act is intensified not merely by looking away from the violence but by *inferring* the extremity of the act by substituting one of the aforementioned “apparatus attractions” in its place. At no point in the torture scene depicted by *I nuovi barbari / The New Barbarians* (Italy / USA, Enzo Girolami, 1982), for example, is the aforementioned public sodomy of the film's protagonist (Scorpion, played by Giancarlo Prete) at the hands of the villain (One, played by George Eastman) explicitly shown on screen – once the rape has begun, in fact, the two men are only shown in the same frame once, and only for half a second. By quickly presenting a number of excessive formal devices, however – very fast edits; a series of fragmented facial close-ups of the numerous onlookers,⁴³ One's grimace and Scorpion's scowl; extreme close-ups of Scorpion's hands on the chains that bind him; shots of white lights “blinding” the camera and a loud and synth sound effect-dominated score – the film can, paradoxically, infer the spectacular qualities of the act without even having to show it taking place.

⁴³ Gunning in fact lays stress elsewhere on the attraction potential of the facial close-up, suggesting that it is a “moment of visual display, a way of attracting attention to a trick or a grotesque (rather than characterising) facial expression (1994, p.190).

This somewhat extreme example of *substitutive* violence, where the violence of an off-screen act is conveyed via an act of “violence” on the continuities of the diegesis itself, is tempered by a number of less stylised scenes where the same process occurs. To take but one example, when the *Mafioso*’s henchman gouges out a police informant’s eye with his thumb in *Uomini si nasce poliziotti si muore / Live Like a Cop, Die Like a Man* (Italy, Ruggero Deodato, 1976), the excessive nature of the act is conveyed not by lingering on the medium shot showing the henchman’s thumb on the eye socket but by a crash zoom into the sickened face of the *Mafioso* onlooker. Having established exactly what is going to happen in the first shot – the thumb will gouge the eye out – responsibility is then delegated to the apparatus and the soundtrack to present this act as an attraction, with the second shot’s excessive lens manipulation combining with the loud scream accompanying it to achieve this. It is hard to convincingly argue that this scene is neither violent nor pleasurable to watch, and numerous acts of *filoni* violence are intensified and often substituted in this manner.

To conclude this discussion of attractions I would like to briefly draw from more traditional psychoanalytic perspectives on spectacle, specifically from Mulvey’s influential 1975 essay ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’. Although Mulvey’s specific examination of gendered gazes jars with my arguments concerning the lack of character-based point-of-view systems in the *filone*, when she discusses the impact of these gazes on film *narrative* it is fascinating to note the similarities with Gunning’s own examination of attractions and their effect on the diegesis. To summarise, Mulvey is generally arguing that women in narrative cinema are typically presented as the passive object of an active male look, suggesting that:

In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*.

(1975, p.40)

Interesting parallels between Mulvey and Gunning’s arguments emerge in light of this quote. Mulvey talks of the female body’s visual and erotic impact, while Gunning speaks of the attraction’s “aggressive sensual or psychological impact” (1986, p.66); Mulvey stresses the purpose of the woman as primarily exhibitionistic, while Gunning

similarly reiterates that “the attraction invokes an exhibitionist rather than a voyeuristic regime” (1993). Furthermore, the term “to-be-looked-at-ness” immediately presents a productive means of describing the spectacular qualities of the *filoni*, for engrained in the concept of the attraction is an excessive emphasis on the visual qualities of the acts and apparatus manipulations described. Mulvey’s argument becomes even more salient, in fact, when she suggests that the spectacle of the female body – like the spectacle of Gunning’s attractions – has a similarly disruptive effect on narrative structure:

The presence of woman is an indispensable element of spectacle in normal narrative film, yet her visual presence tends to work against the development of a story-line, to freeze the flow of the action in moments of erotic contemplation. This alien presence then has to be integrated into cohesion with the narrative.

(2004, p.40)

While Mulvey’s to-be-looked-at-ness (which, it must be stressed, focuses exclusively on mainstream cinema) results in narrative pauses and moments of erotic contemplation, of central importance here is the fact that the alien threat posed by the female body to narrative cohesion is ultimately *contained* and managed by the mainstream films she discusses. The point of departure for the attraction in early cinema (and, by extension, the *filone*), however, is that the to-be-looked-at-ness of the images presented does not merely freeze the flow of the narrative but almost completely *displaces* it. Women in classical Hollywood cinema may create pauses in the narrative, but they are nonetheless ultimately bound by it and its formal system of continuity, while the to-be-looked-at-ness of the *filone*’s numerous attractions has the potential to wreak a far more destructive force on the stability of the diegesis.

3.4 Defining “Violence” in Film

Before moving on to illustrate the ways in which such theories can be used to examine the spectatorial processes at work in the *filone*, I would like in this section to move from discussing such examples of “destructive force” to a more precise investigation of exactly what is meant by the term “violence” in cinema. To do this requires an engagement not just with the relatively small number of academic studies

that specifically address film violence but also with the far larger body of arguments that make up what I (drawing on the meta-analytic work of critics like Barker and Petley) shall define as the “media / violence” debate.⁴⁴ Studies of violent representations themselves in cinema are in fact relatively few and far between, with the majority of studies focusing on the *effects* of these representations on their audiences, either in terms of the potentially harmful psychological impact that they can have on children and adults or – commonly within horror film theory – the ways in which the viewer is psychoanalytically positioned by them. While such examinations have presented a number of interesting and constructive viewpoints from which to examine screen violence, the idea persists that violence as a textual rather than contextual entity – *what* acts are depicted, *who* is doing them and to whom, *how* they are mediated by the text – is a subject all-too-commonly brushed aside within the media / violence debate.

Engaging at great length with what is commonly known as the “effects debate” is beyond the scope of this thesis, which is far more concerned with the actual “effects” of violence on the text, its diegesis and its positioning of the viewer, rather than its potential negative effect on his or her behaviour or psychology. Indeed, critics such as Barker and Gauntlett have repeatedly argued that the effects model (which states that violent films cause violent behaviour in the viewer) should be abandoned in favour of more productive debates about media / violence, with Gauntlett in particular arguing that “the effects paradigm should be left to bury itself whilst prudent media researchers move on to explore these other areas (1998, p.128).⁴⁵ The main reason why I have mentioned such studies, however, is to highlight the fact that the way in which they use the term “violence” – and by extension the way in which “violence” is largely positioned across the entire media / violence debate – reflects the unavoidably *ideological* nature of the term. Far more than words like “spectacle”, “excess” and “attraction”, “violence” is almost inseparable from physical, social, cultural, sexual and political contexts in many of these accounts. In the introduction to their study *Sex,*

⁴⁴ Barker and Petley (1997) and Karen Boyle (2004) decide to place the slash “/” between the terms as a means of acknowledging the problematic nature of placing such relatively imprecise terms as “media” and “violence” side by side. Furthermore, dividing the words in this way allows the term to summarise both central strands of the debate, which focus on violence *in* the media (representations of violence) and on violence *and* the media (the ways in which the print media and journalism comment on violence).

⁴⁵ Gauntlett’s essay “Ten Things Wrong with the Effects Model” and Barker and Petley’s *Ill Effects* both present fascinating critiques of the predominant effects arguments.

Violence and the Media, for example, Eysenck and Nias set out to identify “the possible influence that viewing and reading overtly pornographic and violent material may have on a person’s conduct” (1978, p.3), indicating a suspicion that scenes of violence may be responsible for “an increase in violence, in vandalism, in pre- and extramarital sex, in perversions, in rape and in the sexual exploitation of minors” (1978, p.9). In Bok’s more recent study, *Mayhem: Violence as Public Entertainment*, the question is posed of “how can we protect not only children but the very sources of our national character from the relentless barrage of media violence?” (1998, back cover). These are but two representative examples from a vast body of literature, but their implicit suggestion (made, tellingly, before any argument has properly begun) that media / violence has a specifically *harmful* effect on society is echoed across the entire debate: as Gauntlett notes, typical assumptions such as this are characterised by “barely concealed conservative ideology” (1998, p.123).

Of perhaps most importance in Eysenck and Nias’ quote above is the fact that “violence” as a discrete entity is aligned not just with vandalism but deviant sexual behaviour. This is an immensely problematic link for any study to make, yet the unqualified correlation between violence and sex is made throughout discussions of media / violence. Duclos’ study of America’s “obsession” with violent representations, for example, sets as one of its central arguments the assertion that “we are all a bunch of killers [...] Before the kill we are rapists and sadists, and afterward we become cannibals” (1998, p.119). In her work on violence in Hollywood cinema, Kinder argues that violence in *The Wild Bunch* is “orgasmic rather than cathartic, erotic rather than revelatory” (2001, p.66), without going on to explain how violence can operate in such sexual terms. Finally, and far closer to home, Nowell-Smith suggests that the Italian Western *filone* is marked by “violence, aggressivity and a fierce and hyperbolic element of male sado-masochism” (1996, p.67), again echoing a number of the arguments already discussed that create explicit links between violence in the *filone* and sexual perversion through their choice of language.

Of course, this is not to undermine the links between violence and sexuality that are frequently made apparent in both the media and real life: indeed, one of the goals of much feminist work in the area has been to draw attention to the interpersonal and

gendered nature of violence.⁴⁶ The key point raised by these quotes, however, remains clear. There is a central fundamental paradox lying at the heart of discussions of “violence”: commentators, critics, academics (and even the first two chapters of this thesis) use the term frequently and unproblematically, as if its definition was wholly unambiguous, yet as writers in the field such as Carter and Weaver note: “what each of us means by ‘violence’ varies, sometimes enormously” (2003, p.17). This highlights a limitation of the prevailing academic work that exists on media / violence, namely the fact that such commentaries typically set out their arguments without firstly seeking to provide and qualify a definition of what “violence” really is: as Boyle’s meta-analytic work in the area suggests, it remains “a term [that they leave] largely undefined” (2004, p.19).

Furthermore, even the minority of media / violence commentators who *do* attempt to define “violence” do so in a manner that only further seems to cloud the definition of the term. A notable example of this can be found in the meta-analytical work of Potter, who states quite early in his study that “definitions for violence vary widely. There is no consensus” (1999, p.3). Yet after usefully foregrounding the vagueness that surrounds “violence” in critical literature and considering a number of types of violence (including both physical and verbal variations), the final definition that he arrives at seems to only further cloud the term itself when he suggests that:

Violence is a violation of a character’s physical or emotional well-being. It includes two key elements - intentionality and harm - at least one of which must be present.

(1999, p.76)

On one hand, Potter’s argument provides a useful foundation on which this chapter can build its own definition of “violence”, for his schema accounts not just for *interpersonal* violent acts (between two or more individuals, for example the whipping of the gladiators in *Sette contro tutti*) but also for acts that are *not* interpersonal, such as the shark attack in *L’ultimo squalo* or the climactic scene in *Profondo Rosso / Deep Red* (Italy, Dario Argento, 1975) where the film’s black-gloved killer dies as a result of catching her necklace in an elevator door and consequently being beheaded by the necklace. In addition, Potter’s introduction of an

⁴⁶ Boyle (2004) points in particular to the work of Liz Kelly (1988), H. Benedict (1993) and Deborah Cameron and Elizabeth Frazer (1987) in this area.

emotional element to violence helps to account for the marked emphasis on suffering that I have identified in the *filoni*: the “sunlight” torture in *Mannaja / A Man Called Blade* (Italy, Sergio Martino, 1977) and the “vampire bat crucifixion” from *Se sei vivo, spara! / Django, Kill...If you Live, Shoot!* (Spain / Italy, Giulio Questi, 1967), for example, lay particular emphasis on the mental – rather than physical – discomfort of the characters involved. On the other hand, Potter’s argument tends somewhat to circularity, resulting from its ultimate attempt to define the word “violence” by using one of its derivatives (“violation”). As a consequence, having made such a point of acknowledging the disparities between critical definitions of violence, Potter’s argument is weakened somewhat by its tacit suggestion that the term can only be described with reference to itself.

This problem of definition persists even upon examining the work of Morrison and McGregor, which explicitly sets out to “determine how [screen] violence [is] defined” (1999, p.vii). Having, like Potter, foregrounded the problem that defining violence presents, Morrison and McGregor conducted a number of interviews and polls with different people from different backgrounds in order to arrive at their own definition, eventually formulating their own definition for screen violence:

Screen violence is any act that is seen or unequivocally signalled which would be considered an act of violence in real life, because the violence was considered unjustified either in the degree or nature of the force used, or that the injured party was undeserving of the violence. The degree of violence is defined by how realistic the violence is considered to be, and made even stronger if the violence inflicted is considered unfair.

(1999, p.9)

Once again, a central limitation of the definition presented is its circularity, for Morrison and McGregor, again like Potter, are attempting to clarify “screen violence” by reiterating the term “violence” itself. Moreover, the decision to base their definition on a supposedly universally accepted “real life” concept of violence only further highlights Boyle’s assertion that violence is *not* a common sense term but rather a deeply and almost unavoidably ideological one (2004, p.xii).

Such an analysis of these inconsistencies raises a central problematic question for my own study: if critics across the media / violence debate either fail to define or

inadequately define their own object of study, does this then entail that the concept is simply too ambiguous to be discussed without appealing to a predetermined common-sense knowledge of what “violence” really is? If, as Gunter notes, “violence does not represent a unitary process or a single set of events or happenings with common antecedents or consequences” (1985, p.2), then how can one go about examining violence in cinema without falling foul of the same definitional problems faced by the majority of other authors? The obvious answer is to take Boyle’s lead by firstly acknowledging these problems and then formulating a working definition of the term that lays out a clearly-defined scope of what the term “violence” signifies within the specific context of my study. As my central interest in this thesis is specifically violence in film, rather than “screen violence”, “media / violence” or “violence” itself, then it should be stressed here that the central term to be defined in this section is “film violence”; a term which, as I shall go on to illustrate, best describes the acts that I have been discussing in the *filoni*.

The Oxford English Dictionary again presents a useful basis on which to develop a manageable concept of film violence, describing “violence” as “the exercise of physical force so as to inflict injury or damage to persons or property” (Oxford University Press 2008), and in doing so provides a useful basis on which to develop a manageable concept of film violence. Firstly, this definition sits well with the physical acts of violence that are most common in the *filone* examined, be they punches, eye mutilations, crucifixions, shootings or other recurring acts. Furthermore, the inclusion of damage to *property* also accounts for spectacular events such as explosions, car crashes and even literal acts of property damage such as *Il cinico l’infame il violento*’s terracotta tile-smashing scene. Finally, the fact that the *OED* definition points towards a far more “objective” notion of violence rather than making a circular reference to “violation” or “violence” provides a far more stable and autonomous conception than that of Morrison or Potter. Yet while this definition quite comfortably covers the multitude of physical acts described, it simply cannot account for the second, perhaps most distinctive, type of *filone* violence that my findings have identified, namely the “violence” inherent in the way that diegetic acts (violent and non-violent) are mediated and rendered as *attractions* by the films examined. If, as Linda Ruth Williams observes, ocular mutilation represents “a form of visual violence ‘done’ to the spectator” (1994, p.16) and the famous scene of camera violence from *The Great*

Train Robbery can be described as “truly gratuitous brutality” by Carter and Weaver, then clearly my definition needs to be altered to incorporate such acts.

Remarkably, the violence that these critics allude to seems to be primarily *extra-diegetic*, occurring outwith the realms of film narration and involving an “attack” on the viewer perpetrated by the text. The question immediately arises: how can the depiction of a character firing a gun or aiming a whip at the camera or be construed as “violent”? Physical force has quite perceptibly been exercised, but no damage to persons or property has been inflicted: the camera lens remains intact. Nevertheless, this notion that violence can be regarded as an act *committed by the text against its viewer* immediately brings to mind Gunning’s arguments about the attraction and the way in which it addresses its viewer. It is quite noteworthy, in fact, how frequently the language that Gunning uses to describe attractions seems to imply both the exercise of physical force (“power”, “relentless force”, “physical impact”) and the inflicting of damage (“terror”, “dangerous”, “swallowing”). By proceeding to describe the scenes as “a succession of shocks” (1989, p.827) which represent “confrontation” (1989, p.825), another question is raised: if there is no inflicting of injury and damage within the diegesis, then who, exactly, is being harmed by this violence? The answer, it appears, is the viewer. In her discussion of ocular mutilation scenes, for example, Linda Ruth Williams argues “it is perhaps the viewer who occupies the most painful position” (1994, p.14) when these acts occur. Moreover, the only point where Clover explicitly refers to one of the *filoni* in her discussion of the horror genre is when she is discussing camera violence, suggesting that “as the diegetic audience is to the diegetic movie, so we are to Bava’s *Demons*;⁴⁷ as the screen of the diegetic horror movie ‘attacked’ its audience, so the screen of *Demons* means to attack *us*” (1992, p.200).

Key to understanding this violence committed against the viewer is the idea of direct address that is again implicit throughout Gunning’s language, for he describes the relationship between viewer and attraction both as a “confrontation” and an “experience of assault”, suggesting that the images of the attraction “rush forward to meet their viewers”, at the same time “[addressing and holding] the spectator,

⁴⁷ *Dèmoni / Demons* (Italy, Lamberto Bava, 1985).

emphasising the act of display” (1989, p.825). The attractions of early cinema, he asserts:

[...] explicitly acknowledge their spectator, seeming to reach outwards and confront. Contemplative absorption is impossible here. The viewer’s curiosity is aroused and fulfilled through a marked encounter, a direct stimulus, a succession of shocks.

(1989, p.827)

This concept of direct address works quite effectively alongside Thompson’s arguments on cinematic excess for, to reiterate her central argument, it is at the points in a film where narrative motivation fails, when excessive elements of the text become more noticeable and the viewer consequently becomes *aware* of the filmic apparatus itself, that the film has greatest potential to “assault” its viewer. This does not mean that *every* occasion where the viewer notices “style for its own sake” is figured as a moment of extra-diegetic violence, of course, but the three types of *filone* attraction delineated by the previous section of this chapter all involve a distinct assault: either diegetically, through the damage to a character or property in the narrative; non-diegetically, through the damage to the coherence of the film and its narration, or often both at once. To summarise, the *filoni*’s general inability to adequately contain and regulate moments of excess engenders in the films the capacity to be violent *even when they are not depicting violence*.

What perhaps distinguishes the *filoni* the most from their mainstream counterparts, then, is the fact that while the cinema of attractions was quickly “strangled”, as Gunning observes, by the arrival of narrative cinema in the 1910s (1986, p.68), relegated (and regulated) to an “underground current” flowing beneath mainstream cinema (1989, p.826), in the *filoni* from the early *pepla* onwards it was never properly “tamed”, and in fact seeped through the cracks in the *filone*’s narratives to engulf and dominate the genre films made between the late 1950s and mid 1980s. To a far greater extent than the mainstream film, the *filone* – through its camera violence, discontinuity editing and attractions – foregrounds and exploits for spectatorial effect the “violence” that critics such as French have argued is inherent in the physical apparatus of film itself. As French notes:

It can be maintained that the flickering passage of twenty-four frames per second through the projector, the vertiginous movement of the

camera, the continuous shifting of viewpoint, the rapid change of image in both size and character, the very idea of montage, make films - irrespective of their subjects - a violent experience for the audience...as everyone knows, the final word before shooting a scene is symbolically the director's call for 'Action'. Not surprisingly to the moviemaker and moviegoer the words 'action' and 'violence' as relating to the content of a film are virtually synonymous.

(1968, pp.68-69)

Bearing these arguments in mind, the definition of "film violence" to be proposed in my analysis of the *filoni* must incorporate both diegetic acts of violence – the various physical acts and damage inflicted on people and property within the films' narratives – but also this "extra-diegetic" violence, which occurs *outside* the narrative and is presented as an attraction through the build-up of excess. The analyses put forward in following chapters are therefore reliant on two central types of violence. Firstly, the miscellanea of punches, gunshots, eye gougings, explosions, rapes, earthquakes, torture scenes and other diegetic acts that punctuate the films examined. Secondly, the violence inscribed by the film apparatus itself on the viewer, configured not only literal attacks on the camera but also by attractions arising from the combination of excessive elements such as crash zooms, discontinuity edits, jump cuts, zip pans, extreme close-ups, sound cliffs and overtly stylised sound effects: in short, moments where excess meaning in the image and soundtrack breaks free of the constraints of narrative and confronts the viewer by presenting an attraction.

Moving forward, I would like to build on the arguments presented and make explicit my own working definition for "film violence"⁴⁸ to be used both in the analysis chapters that follow and retrospectively to clarify the findings that have already been presented. *Film violence is, within the diegesis of a text, the exercise of physical force so as to inflict injury, damage or physical / emotional distress to persons, property and objects and, on an extra-diegetic level, the revelation of cinematic excess so as to directly address or attack the spectator and inflict damage on narrative cohesion by foregrounding attractions in the text.*

⁴⁸ In following chapters this term will be commonly abbreviated to "violence", and it should be stressed that every occurrence of the term shall refer to the specific working definition put forward in this chapter.

3.5 Genre Theory, Violence and Textual Analysis

Although a working definition like this provides a useful tool with which the following analysis chapters can further investigate the different patterns and types of film violence within the *filone*, before doing this I would like to qualify my use of close textual analysis by placing my work within the context of existing literature on violence in mainstream film genres. As the previous section asserted, explicit discussions of violence as a discrete entity in mainstream cinema are few and far between, but as this section shall show, its function is nonetheless inferred throughout prevailing critiques of “violent” genres (i.e. genres where diegetic violence is central to narrative development) such as the horror film and the western. These genres are in fact particularly useful when examining the *filone* for, as Chapter One noted, the Italian western and horror film were the most enduring of the cycles examined. A distinct limitation of these mainstream genre theories, however, is that despite being focused on the films and what binds them together, very few pay adequate attention to the specific textual features of the films – patterns of editing, mise-en-scène and soundtrack – and how such features have prompted the authors to arrive at their generic conclusions. By making this point I am not trying to argue *against* taking this generic approach to the films, for this is exactly what my own study is doing with the *filoni*. However, an objective that colours every chapter of this thesis is to not only identify generic traits in the *filone*, but to also illustrate that these patterns emerged as a result of *close analysis* of a number of the films. To quote Freeland, who argues against the predominant use of psychoanalytic feminisms in horror theory, “I am more interested in what the movies *say*, in how they are structured to present certain contents” (2000, p.4).

A habitual tendency in accounts of violent representations in cinema is an overemphasis on what I would call “metaphorical” – that is to say, thematic, political, ideological or psychoanalytic – readings of the films. Again, such perspectives are often of value – Frayling (1998) and Barry (2004), for example, put forward interesting thematic and political readings of the Italian western and *poliziotteschi* respectively – but my central point here is that many of them pay little heed to what, if

anything, the films are “saying” in the first place.⁴⁹ As Klevan notes in his meta-critical analysis of academic writing on *Dead Ringers* (Canada / USA, David Cronenberg, 1988), much modern scholarship is marked by “the avoidance of an analysis of film style” (2000, p.148); a point he makes in more detail in the extract below:

I consider the sensitive scrutiny of film style to bring intensity and discipline to film study. I am sympathetic, however, to the difficulty of the task: scrutinising the visual and aural significance of films is demanding; there are few exemplary models from which to learn; the institutional environments and the pressure to publish unreasonably force all manner of short cuts and contrivances; and, beyond that, there is simply the challenge, often heartbreaking, often ending in defeat, to find any appropriate words which fit one’s sense of a moment in a film.

(2000, p.148)

Such intensity and discipline in the analysis of films is often forgone by critics in favour of harnessing them to larger political, cultural, social and – typically with violent film genres – psychoanalytic readings, prioritising context over text in a manner similar to many of the media / violence debates discussed by the previous section. Most critical work on the American Western genre, for example, has placed it squarely within a structuralist paradigm,⁵⁰ using limited narrative analysis of the films to develop formulae outlining the conflicts and values on which the Western myth is constructed. As a consequence of this, violence in the American western has primarily been regarded in a *thematic* and *ideological* context, a view best summed up by Cawelti, who argues that:

One source of the cowboy hero’s appeal is the way in which he [gives] a sense of moral significance and order to violence. His reluctance and detachment, the way in which he kills only when he is forced to do so, the aesthetic order he imposes upon his acts of violence through the abstract ritual of the shootdown, and finally his mode of killing cleanly and purely at a distance through the magic of

⁴⁹ Another central reason for this lack of close analysis of the *filone*, in particular, is undoubtedly the fact that a vast majority of existing academic work on the films is limited to articles and chapters of larger and wider studies. Nonetheless, chapters such as Eleftheriotis’ ‘Genre Criticism and the Spaghetti Western’ in *Popular Cinemas of Europe* (2001) – which combines national cinema and genre theory with textual analysis of two *filoni* - illustrate how such constraints of length do not have to preclude close analyses.

⁵⁰ Kitses’ (1969) work was instrumental in drawing on the work of Levi-Strauss and other structuralists to identify the thematic conflicts at the heart of the (American) western: other commentaries in this area include Wright (1974) and Cawelti (1975) as well as Kitses (2004).

his six-gun cover the nakedness of violence and aggression beneath a skin of aesthetic and moral propriety.

(1975, p.88)

On one hand, such accounts of the American western are of great value within the field of genre theory, for they not only identify a number of fundamental similarities across a diverse range of films but also provide models against which the *differences* of non-mainstream films like the Italian western can be charted by theorists such as Eleftheriotis (and, in the following chapter, myself). On the other, however, critiques like this typically succeed in putting forward a series of – albeit useful – generalisations without explicit acknowledgement of the analyses from which they presumably arose. For instance, exactly *how* the final showdown of a western becomes an “abstract ritual”, the hero’s acts of violence are “clean” and “pure” and the “nakedness of violence and aggression” are made apparent in the films remains unclear. Furthermore, such accounts seem to presuppose – like the definitional arguments examined in the previous section – that their readers are aware of an objective entity called “violence” requiring no further clarification or, crucially, any illustration with reference to the texts themselves.

It should be pointed out that neither Cawelti nor Kitses before him are explicitly aiming to discuss violence in their studies for, all things considered, why should they? Diegetic violence plays an important role in the American western, but the fact that it operates primarily *within* narrative structure, as a device to resolve tensions in the plot (rather than in the *filoni* where it is foregrounded to the extent of becoming the primary object of interest) renders it of less importance in its own right than the larger issue of the western narrative and the thematic, symbolic and ideological concerns that it raises. Nevertheless, the vague nature of terms used in this extract is illustrative of the tendency “to summarise, to assess quickly rather than to discriminate” that Klevan identifies (2000, p.151); That such specific issues of film style are routinely beyond the scope of many genre theorists suggests that the clear potential of close textual analysis to both give rise to and subsequently fortify their arguments is commonly ignored.

It is not just in Western genre criticism where such tendencies become apparent, though. As perhaps the most widely-theorised violent film genre, the horror film’s

place in critical discourses is characterised by metaphorical and thematic analyses; the most pervading of these being psychoanalytic in approach. As a consequence, academic literature on the horror genre typically places its emphasis not on acts of violence but on the larger frameworks of identification and spectatorship within which they operate. Furthermore, although such accounts typically put much more emphasis on the texts themselves, their analysis seems predominantly concerned with thematic narrative and character examinations rather than more detailed analyses of mise-en-scène, soundtrack and editing. To illustrate this I would like to examine the work of Creed, who in her study *The Monstrous Feminine* presents a number of useful perspectives on horror cinema. Drawing both from Freudian psychology and the work of literary theorist Kristeva, Creed seeks to establish that it is commonly the female body, coded as “the monstrous-feminine”, that provides the central source of horror in the viewer:

The horror film brings about a confrontation with the abject (the corpse, bodily wastes, the monstrous-feminine) in order, finally, to eject the abject and redraw the boundaries between the human and nonhuman. As a form of modern defilement rite, the horror film works to separate out the symbolic order from all that threatens its stability, particularly the mother and all that her universe signifies.

(1986, p.46)

Creed’s arguments have helped contribute to a growing body of feminist and psychoanalytic work on the horror film and influenced a number of thematic approaches to the genre, and her analyses of “classic” mainstream horror films such as *Psycho* (USA, Alfred Hitchcock, 1960), *Carrie* (USA, Brian de Palma, 1976) and *Alien* (UK / USA, Ridley Scott, 1979) are typically more detailed than those offered by Kitses and Cawelti of their own chosen films. Nonetheless, the fundamentally *prescriptive* way in which she presents these analyses seems to undermine the clear quality and originality of the arguments conveyed, as a brief examination of her central points illustrates. Key to Creed’s argument is the idea that a central source of horror lies within the vagina and “the terrifying shock of threatened castration” (1986, p.35) that it represents; a trend that she proceeds to illustrate by discussing the Perseus myth, the Oedipus complex, the Egyptian Sphinx, religious cleansing rituals and traditional depictions of the mother goddess figure. Yet while arguments like this provide a novel (and fairly convincing) insight to the often gendered nature of horror spectatorship, with such a dense layer of cultural references being used throughout, it

seems that any use of close *film* analysis to illustrate Creed's points is untenable; highlighting that which Klevan identifies as "the problem of critical focus: the place, purpose and weighting of 'external' references" (2000, p.163). By adapting theories from a number of vastly different disciplines and placing greater emphasis on external non-filmic sources than the films themselves, Creed's reading of the films as a consequence becomes overtly vague and unnecessarily prescriptive. In her discussion of the "archaic mother" theme in *Alien*, for example, she refers to the alien ship as "Pandora's box", the alien's mouth as a "toothed vagina", and of the film's "face-hugger" scene – where an alien embryo bursts through the chest of one of the characters – as recalling:

Freud's reference to an extreme primal-scene fantasy in which the subject imagines travelling back inside the womb to watch her or his parents having sexual intercourse.

(1986, p.49)

In summary, Creed's arguments undoubtedly provide a fresh perspective from which to examine films like *Alien*, but it is her failure to adequately justify this perspective with specific reference to the film that presents the central problem in this case. In lieu of describing how formal aspects of mise-en-scène, editing and soundtrack actually convey these ideas of gendered monstrosity, Creed's argument is littered with vague imagery and language that suggests she has arrived at her conclusions before undertaking the analyses presented: references to the ship's "fresh, antiseptic atmosphere"; its "gigantic womb-like chamber"; its horseshoe-shaped "vaginal opening" and its "ghostly light" (1986, pp.49-50); terms which in truth operate much like "violence" and "sadism" in their lack of specificity. By favouring allegory over analysis, the finer details of how these conclusions have been arrived at from the text become obscured.

In making these arguments I am not attempting to reject the use of psychoanalysis as a tool for identifying how films position and affect their viewers, nor am I trying to argue that it is possible – or even advantageous – for theorists to write about such sequences without being coloured by their own ideology and subjectivity: as the previous section sought to illustrate, it is almost impossible to talk about violence, gender and sexuality in an objective and neutral manner. Furthermore, as Klevan notes:

The striving for particular words, however, those which do justice to the visual and aural specifics of a film's expressive personality, is an arduous one, sometimes thankless, and this may be why (these critics) are keen to avoid it.

(2000, p.164)

Despite making this idea clear throughout her study, even Freeland herself tends towards such unnecessarily prescriptive style in her own writing. Although her recognition of the diversity of horror's subgenres and subsequent decision to focus on individual texts rather than generalise (2000, p.10) provides a useful point of origin for her analysis, there is a distinct irony in the fact that her ensuing discussion raises exactly the same issues of specificity as Creed's. Examining the relevance of the birth metaphor to *Frankenstein* (USA, Kenneth Branagh, 1994), for example, Freeland describes how:

The vat is smashed open (the 'water breaks') and Victor lifts out his huge new 'baby', smacking its chest to clear its lungs. We watch an extended scene of birth struggle to 'deliver' his huge, naked and 'hairless' baby by lifting it out of the slime. Giving birth is not only very hard labour here; it's messy too.

(2000, pp. 42-43)

Once again, exactly *how* this scene is mediated and presented to the viewer through the film's formal aspects remains a mystery in this extract and, in fact, throughout Freeland's argument as a whole: the language used merely retells and subsequently analogises the film's narrative, without consideration of the specifically *cinematic* aspects of Branagh's film. Indeed, many of the conclusions presented by Freeland could quite comfortably have been derived from Mary Shelley's original novel, such is the extent to which her analysis – like those of Cawelti and Creed – concentrates on the exclusively narrative aspects of the films. The absence of specifically "cinematic" language in *The Naked and the Undead* is illustrated throughout by phrases such as "some moments in the film are visually spectacular" (2000, p.53), "the special effects go wild" (2000, p.97) and references to "odd lighting" (2000, p.220); vague terms which again only seem to cloud the arguments presented. Perhaps most notably, this vagueness extends to Freeland's sporadic discussions of diegetic violence in the films examined, two examples of which are presented below:

[The "slasher" movie displays] a psychopathic killer, usually a male, whose assumed blood lust drives him to a sort of extreme

violence against women. Such violence, often eroticised, is showcased by the camera in increasingly graphic and disturbing ways.

(2000, pp.161-162)

Many bloody or gruesome scenes in [*The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*] are static and call attention to themselves as ‘arty’ [...] the realism of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* vanishes in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* to be replaced by hyperbolic violence, violence as visual excess.

(2000, p.248)

These two quotes in fact offer a neat précis of the recurrent manner in which film violence is typically discussed by genre theorists, who habitually propose such terms as “hyperbolic violence”, “eroticised violence”, “sadistic violence” and “visual excess” without linking such terms to the specific combinations of image, sound and editing which prompted their arrival at such conclusions. There is great scope for work to be done in Freeland’s study (and indeed elsewhere) on exactly how violence in the “slasher” movie is eroticised; how the camera renders violence as graphic and disturbing; how violence calls attention to itself and how violence creates visual excess, yet such considerations remain largely unaddressed.

These patterns can also be observed across the small body of work existing on the *filoni* and their cycles. Mary Wood, for example, describes how the western *filone* is characterised by “spectacle, and a very Italian exploration of the mise-en-scène of space and place” (2005, p.55), without identifying what is specifically “spectacular” about the films, not to mention what is meant by “a very Italian exploration”. Jenks discusses Bava’s *La maschera del demonio / Black Sunday* (Italy, 1960) in terms of its “overt images of sadism and bodily corruption, which almost overwhelmed narrative drive and coherence” (1992, p.153), but never expands upon what it is that makes the film “sadistic”, or how bodies are specifically “corrupted”. As a final example, Lagny, in his discussion of peplum *La Battaglia di Maratona / The Giant of Marathon* (Italy / France, Jacques Tourneur, 1959), describes a scene where: “men of the Sacred Guard, dressed in elegant white loincloths, move about gracefully despite the spears which transfix them, causing red clouds of blood to swirl prettily in the blue water” (1992, p.170). Lagny’s argument about the peplum is, in fact, very interesting, and identifies a number of recurrent thematic motifs across its narratives,

but it is illustrative of a trend in both critiques of the *filone* and of the mainstream genre film to use terms like “pretty” that says little about the actual elements of the images and sounds presented.

A final aspect of approaches to the horror film that I wish to highlight is a tendency to *over-generalise* about the genre based on the study of a few remarkable and often exceptional films. I have already noted the tendency of critiques of the *filone* to focus mainly on “genre *auteurs*” like Bava, Leone and Argento, and this is also often the case in the work of mainstream genre critics. As Jancovich notes:

Just as the history of horror often assumed a central protagonist who was the subject of its narrative, approaches to the genre have often seen their task as that of identifying the true subject of horror from within all its disparate and diverse manifestations.

(2002, p.10)

With this in mind, the fact that Creed illustrates the true subject of horror (monstrous femininity) with almost exclusive reference to *Psycho*, *Carrie*, *Alien* and *The Exorcist* (USA, William Friedkin, 1973) – films that clearly foreground female monstrosity – somewhat limits the universality of her arguments. The same is also true of Williams, who similarly delineates monstrosity in the horror film as being rooted in the deviation from patriarchal norms, arguing that “the monster’s power is one of sexual difference from the male” (1996, p.20). Her choice of texts again proves to be unnecessarily prescriptive in this case, for she confines her scope to a discussion of *Psycho*, *Peeping Tom* (UK, Michael Powell, 1960), *Halloween* (U.S.A, John Carpenter, 1978) and *Dressed to Kill* (U.S.A, Brian de Palma, 1980), each of which depicts a sexually ambiguous male killer whose victims are primarily female. Furthermore, although Williams’ argument presents a useful model of character-based narrative identification in the horror film, the specifics of exactly how these films align the viewer with such viewpoints through distinctive patterns of editing and mise-en-scène are once again eluded. Clearly, a more wide-ranging corpus of study and increased attention to textual detail are required, and the approach to be taken in the following chapters is far more indebted to the work of Clover (1992) who, perhaps more than any other horror theorist, succeeds in illustrating her arguments about gender identification and the gaze with close reference to a number of films chosen specifically from outside the body of canonical and “obvious” horror texts.

Throughout the study process I have sought to take a similar approach by selecting films from outwith the fan canon of “classic” *filoni*, as well as choosing films which distinctly problematise my arguments.

3.6 Conclusion

In highlighting some of the recurring shortcomings of these commentaries on film violence, I have sought throughout to give an indication of some of the key points of origin for my *own* work in the area and to suggest the central debates in which my analysis of the *filoni* can intervene. Firstly, by talking about violence, spectacle and excess as discrete entities within film narrative and focusing on how they are mediated by the text, I wish to draw from and evaluate the usefulness of the genre theories discussed in discussing the *filone*; a task that the following chapter shall take as one of its central objectives. Secondly, having raised the idea of viewing positions not just through my discussion of horror genre theory but also with the direct address arguments cited by both Gunning and Hawkins, identified in the attraction, my fifth chapter seeks to intervene with debates of spectatorship in cinema, highlighting the different ways in which the viewer is *placed* by attractions and violence in the *filone* text and in the process testing the boundaries of these dominant theories. Finally, and perhaps most crucially, by using my specific working definition of “film violence” to discuss both diegetic and non-diegetic violence I hope throughout the thesis to illustrate a new and more productive approach to the discussion of violence in cinema that goes beyond the problems of definition, generalisation and scope identified across the debates examined.

Having identified a general lack of specificity in many of the arguments discussed, I also want to take Klevan’s lead by ensuring that the theoretical models I will be applying to the *filoni* are linked to and interrogated by close textual analysis of the films, ensuring that the analyses presented in the following chapters inform the theory, and vice-versa. While exactly what “violence” is and how it operates within cinema has often remained unclear and unsubstantiated by many of the studies examined, the following chapters seek to add clarity to the debates, paving the way for future discussions of these subjects both in the *filone* and in other cinemas.

Chapter Four

Narrative versus Excess in the *Filone*

4.1 Introduction

Narrative is always a process of transformation of the balance of elements that constitute its pretext: the interruption of an initial equilibrium and the tracing of the dispersal and refiguration of its components. The system of narration characteristic of mainstream cinema is one which orders that dispersal and refiguration in a particular way, so that dispersal, disequilibrium is both maintained and contained in figures of symmetry, of balance, its elements finally re-placed in a new equilibrium whose achievement is the condition of narrative closure.

(Neale 1980, p.20)

My idea was to make an absolute film, with all the horrors of the world. It's a plotless film: there's no logic to it, just a succession of images. In Italy we make films based on pure themes, without a plot. [...] People who blame *The Beyond* for its lack of story don't understand that it is a film of images, which must be received without any reflection.

Lucio Fulci, 1981.

Cited by: *Obscure Horror* (2007)

The clear contrast between these two narrative “models” provides a useful starting-point for a broader discussion of narration in the *filone* for, as my earlier references to the paracinematic approach of this thesis asserted, assessing the *filone*'s structure in terms of its *deviation* from mainstream theories of narrative and genre provides a useful means of establishing exactly what is different and often unique about the films. This idea of the films' fundamentally “plotless” nature is not only perpetuated by the often self-aggrandising quotes of directors like Fulci – who also infamously claimed that “violence *is* Italian art” (Thrower 1999, p.153) – but also by theorists like Nowell-Smith, Volpi and Ricci, who describe the “pure, abstract, violent spectacle” of the western *filone* (1996, p.67) and suggest that in the films of Dario Argento “the imaginary breaks free from narrative and Argento allows vision to take priority, in a kaleidoscope of glowing images which reflect an original poetry of the horrific” (1996, pp. 64-65).

Examining these extracts raises a central question for my own study: is it feasible to talk of “plotless films” using models derived from narrative cinema? How can an entity that is “abstracted” be productively linked with the more definite narratives of the films? And what kinds of “symmetry” and “disequilibrium” can be traced in films with no logic and which prompt no reflection?

While it may be tempting to set up the *filone* and the “classical” narrative model as complete opposites, in truth this approach is unnecessarily reductive, for to create a binary opposition between the Italian film’s apparent narrative incoherence and the mainstream genre film’s complete legibility far oversimplifies the relationship identified by my findings. Fulci’s film is no more plotless than a mainstream horror film – for example, *Psycho* (USA, Alfred Hitchcock, 1960) – is bereft of spectacular moments with the sole intention of shocking the audience. In fact, rather than presenting the mainstream genre film and the *filone* as exact opposites, I wish to lay stress on the fact that the *filone* – as an entertainment film made for mass consumption and domestic competition with mainstream genre films – generally presents a diegesis with the motivations, coherence and narrative functions identified by Neale. Despite the paracinematic emphasis on excess that typifies the *filoni*, they cannot be comfortably described as “art” films, nor could they be delineated as “films of images” or “pure, abstract spectacle” – whatever it is that these terms are supposed to signify. While films such as *Un Chien Andalou* (France, Luis Buñuel, 1929), *Week-End* (Italy / France, Jean-Luc Godard, 1968) or *Salò, o le 120 giornate di Sodoma / Salo* (Italy, Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1975) would perhaps be better understood in this manner, the *filoni* are in fact marked by their reliance – however tenuous – on the conventions of plot, story, dialogue and character essential to narrative cinema. What this chapter shall do, however, is build on this by interrogating the first of Chapter Two’s hypotheses, namely the suggestion that the narrative script of the *filone* is perpetually in conflict with and, centrally, often *overshadowed* by the excess script that Barthes and Thompson stress is present to some degree in all films.

The analyses presented in this chapter shall therefore convey a sense of what happens *outwith* the spectacular moments described in the last two chapters; how narrative and excess continually vie for dominance in the text from the opening credits until the acts of violence that commonly draw the *filoni* to a close. This chapter therefore focuses

on the “bigger picture” of how cinematic excess in the *filone* is not only contained and regulated by narrative but, more importantly, how it frequently rises to the “surface” of the text, creating spectacle and attractions and usurping narrative continuity. By choosing two representative *filoni* that can be compared and contrasted to help investigate how this process works I shall use textual analysis in conjunction with theories of classical narration and genre, a ground-clearing exercise that points towards the second part of this chapter where I shall propose my *own* structuralist model of *filone* narrative. In doing this I shall problematise the somewhat superficial relationship between the *filone* and the mainstream film set up by the opening quotes presented, instead providing a more valuable means of examining these films that paves the way for further close examination of the *filoni*, not just in the chapters that ensue but within the field of genre and narrative studies. To do this, of course, requires a discussion of narrative theory itself and the opening section of this chapter focuses on prevailing structuralist approaches to film narrative. Drawing on the work of Barthes, Thompson, Bordwell and other critics I shall establish a model of “mainstream narration” against which the *filone*’s narrative deviations can be pitted before turning my attention to the Hollywood musical; a genre whose episodic structure and emphasis on visual and aural excesses clearly begs examination in my own field of study.

Once this theoretical backdrop has been established, the main analysis section of the chapter shall carry out an analysis of *poliziotteschi filone* *Uomini si nasce poliziotti si muore / Live Like a Cop, Die Like a Man* (Italy, Ruggero Deodato, 1976), comparing and contrasting the film’s structure with that of *giallo* *Solamente Nero / The Blood Stained Shadow* (Italy, Antonio Bido, 1978) and drawing out examples from other *filoni* to illustrate the interplay between narrative and excess in the film. Proceeding chronologically through the films, this section shall begin by examining their opening sequences before going on to identify the other key structural patterns that emerge. By doing this I shall not only test the limits of the hypotheses from Chapter Two but also work towards the more crucial end of creating a model of *filone* narrative to be formulated by this analysis. By recalling the larger ideological, political and thematic tensions that the mainstream genre film’s narrative is typically portrayed as resolving, I wish to raise the question of whether or not the *filone*, characterised as it is by frequent narrative instability, can resolve such tensions in its numbers and, if not, then

to pose the question of exactly what – if any – tensions are resolved. By drawing from both the mainstream genre theories and prevailing critical perspectives on the musical – the “numbers” of which provide a useful comparison point with the spectacular and violent scenes of the *filoni* – I shall address this central question and point towards the investigation of spectatorial pleasure and viewing positions to follow in Chapter Five.

Before I begin, I wish to expand upon my use of a paracinematic approach to contrast the *filoni* with mainstream cinema. In using the terms “mainstream genre theory” and “mainstream narration” throughout I am referring to a specific body of structuralist work derived from specifically American popular genre films (westerns; gangster films and horror films, for example) and to a model of “classical” narration proposed by Bordwell (1985, pp.156-204) that was, and to an extent still is, the predominant mode of narration in mainstream cinema. In doing this I am aware of the dangers posed by over-generalisation, and it is not my intention here to be any more reductive with my summary of mainstream cinema than is necessary to provide a useful contrast with the *filone*. Bearing this in mind, there are two central assumptions that this chapter draws from these genre and narrative theorists: firstly, that mainstream cinema has storytelling and diegetic coherence as its central priorities, and secondly that these priorities are achieved by the interruption and re-establishing of narrative equilibrium and a form built around symmetry, containment the regulation of excess within the text, reflecting a mode of narration that, as Bordwell, Thompson and Staiger argue, “strives to conceal its artifice through techniques of continuity and ‘invisible’ storytelling [and is] comprehensible and unambiguous” (1985, p.3).

4.2 Genre, Narrative and Mainstream Cinema

As Kitses notes, genre theory has been a central developing strand of film studies since the 1970s; inspired by “the wars that had erupted in the 1950s over high and low culture” (2004, p.12) and figured as an emergent reaction against prevailing auteurist perspectives of the time. Early film genre theorists including Kitses (1969) himself and McArthur (1972) proposed narrative models for film genres which were built, as the former notes, on “a scaffold of meanings [grounded] in issues of American identity at both individual and national levels” (2004, p.12): as a consequence, the two

genres initially theorised the most were the western and gangster film for, as McArthur notes:

The western and the gangster film have a special relationship with American society. Both deal with critical phases of American history. It could be said that they represent America talking to itself about, in the case of the western, its agrarian past, and in the case of the gangster film / thriller, its urban technological present.

(1972, p.18)

Genre, for critics such as Kitses and McArthur, is thus inseparable from specifically American ideological and historical concerns: film narrative is used to present, discuss and eventually resolve not only the story of the diegesis but also, on a deeper level, these wider thematic antinomies. The plots and characters of the western film may change, argues Kitses, but its thematic structure remains the same, built around what he calls “a structuralist grid focused around the frontier’s dialectical play of forces [and] embodied in the master binary opposition of wilderness and civilisation (1969, p.12)”. This approach is also taken by McArthur, who specifically locates the iconography of the gangster film within a larger symbolic and ideological framework linking the films’ form to developments in America following the 1929 stock market crash, the Great Depression and subsequent rise of Fascism in Europe (p.67).

This approach to narrative as a structure within which larger thematic antinomies are resolved can also be traced to prevailing non-psychoanalytic *horror* genre theory, epitomised by the work of Robin Wood. Although Wood uses an essentially Freudian model to describe how the monster of the horror film represents what he terms “the return of the repressed”, his central approach to the (predominantly American) films discussed is Marxist in origin. Once again, the central conflicts that Wood argues are taking place in the horror film are interwoven with specifically American thematic issues; a point he makes clear in the following extract:

Since *Psycho*, the Hollywood cinema has implicitly recognised horror as both American and familial – an alternative definition of those “good old values” that the Reagan administration and the 80s Hollywood cinema are trying to convince us are still capable of reaffirmation.

(1986, p.87)

As Altman notes in his meta-analytic work on film genre, these American genres do not only possess clear and stable identities and borders, but also work to articulate wider themes specific to the cultures from which they emerged, serving a distinct ritual and / or ideological function (1999, p.26). In this way film genre theories often present a series of thematic *conflicts* that are articulated and ultimately resolved by the narrative of each film: the western, for example, is commonly read as symbolic of the conflict between wilderness (the individual; nature / agrarianism; the American West) and civilisation (community; culture; the American East). The gangster film articulates the conflict between the individual (often the gangster) and society (the police); the horror film depicts the conflict between normality (heterosexual, patriarchal capitalism and the American family) and deviancy (alternative ideology or sexuality; individualism).

Examining film narrative in terms of the wider conflicts that it articulates is by no means limited to study of American genres, however. Lowenstein's (2005) discussion of Japanese, French, British *and* American horror films, for example, links their narratives to wider discourses of nation, suggesting that the film narratives examined reflect the anxiety felt in the aftermath of national traumas such as Hiroshima and the Vietnam War. As the first chapter noted, Barry's (2004) study of the *poliziotteschi* suggests that conflicts between law and order, honesty and Mafia corruption, communism and Christian Democracy – all key to the political turmoil and anxiety of mid-1970s Italy – are similarly articulated in the films. Furthermore, Frayling's examination of the "political" western *filoni* identifies a number of ideological conflicts also related to communism (and in particular the Mexican Revolution) that are discernible in their narratives (1998, p.217-244). As much structuralist theory from Lévi-Strauss' *Structural Anthropology* (1963) onwards has illustrated, *any* narrative can be read in such terms: while approaching the *filone* in this way creates valuable new perspectives from which to examine the films, there is an overarching sense that these oppositions are of far lesser importance than the more immediate *structural* tensions between narrative and excess that the *filoni* consistently foreground.

Before going on to discuss this in greater detail, a central question remains: if genre theorists like Kitses, Wood and McArthur view mainstream film narratives in terms of

the thematic conflicts that they raise, then precisely how are these conflicts resolved? The answer, argues Neale, is through *violence*. Violent acts in typically “violent” genres such as the western and gangster film, he argues, are intrinsic to the equilibrium → disequilibrium → new equilibrium transformation that structuralists like Todorov identify as being fundamental to narratives. As Neale notes:

In the western, the gangster film and the detective film, disruption is always figured literally – as physical violence. Disequilibrium is inaugurated by violence which marks the process of the elements disrupted and which constitutes the means by which order is finally (re)established. In each case, equilibrium and disequilibrium are signified specifically in terms of Law, in terms of the presence / absence, effectiveness / ineffectiveness of legal institutions and their agents. In each case too, therefore, the discourses mobilised in these genres are discourses about crime, legality, justice, social order, civilisation, private property, civic responsibility and so on.

(1980, p.21)

It is typically violence (or the threat of violence) that therefore creates and maintains disequilibrium in the western, the gangster film and, by extension, the horror film – typically the most violent of the genres examined. In a number of these genre films, the stability of a group of people, a town or often an entire society is threatened by one or more antagonists – hired guns, cattle ranchers, Native Americans, gangsters, vampires or murderous psychopaths, for example – who commonly disrupt an initial equilibrium through their violent or threatening behaviour. At the same time, it is typically violence (perpetrated by a protagonist) that restores equilibrium at the end of the film and allows the narrative to draw to a close: the police shoot a Mafia boss; the killer is beaten up and captured or killed; Dracula is staked through the heart; the cowboy hero shoots the villain in a climactic showdown. In all these cases, violence works as a discrete element of film narration: like character dialogue and action, it is absolutely essential to *causality*; the means by which – as Bordwell et al note – “the bulk of the film’s flow of information” is conveyed (1985, pp.30-31).

I would like to problematise this argument somewhat by pointing out that despite having this narrative function such scenes of violence in mainstream cinema almost invariably serve a distinctive *spectacular* function. The numerous fistfights, chases, shoot-outs and often grisly murders that punctuate these genres serve the two central narrative purposes of advancing the plot and providing suspense, horror and other

narrative pleasures, but the way in which these responses are commonly *intensified* by combinations of editing, mise-en-scène and sound results in the unavoidable build-up of excess meaning in the image and soundtrack. *Psycho*'s infamous shower murder scene presents an extreme example of this: on one hand, when "Mrs" Bates murders Marion this action advances the plot (by removing its protagonist and introducing an antagonist), establishes genre conventions (by introducing a crazed murderer) and creates a number of varying sensations in the viewer (horror; distaste; discomfort; the disbelief that the protagonist has been killed off at a relatively early stage in the narrative). Nevertheless, there are a number of aspects of this sequence that are *not* strictly necessary for narrative advancement yet have a discernible effect on the intensity of the spectacle presented: the rapid editing; the violation of the 180-degree line and ensuing discontinuity edits; the use of recurring facial close-ups in differing ratio; the overtly stylised backlighting of Bates; the use of extreme high-angle shots and shots of "her" plunging the knife towards the camera, not to mention the equally stylised loud violin stabs for which the scene is perhaps most memorable.

When explicitly laid out like this, in fact, these excessive formal features could just as easily belong to one of the *filoni* as they could an example of mainstream horror cinema. Yet what chiefly distinguishes *Psycho* from the *filone* is the fact that these potentially excessive elements are regulated by the film's narration, and as a result do not threaten the stability of the film's diegesis. To draw this out: the sequence presents a series of fast discontinuity edits and angles that confuse space and disorientate the viewer, yet it is essential for the film's narration that the viewer is disorientated and unaware of the murderer's identity. The sequence presents a series of shots (verging on camera violence) where Bates slashes towards the camera, yet these shots are alternated with facial close-ups which reiterate the narrative and character-based point-of-view that the film has adopted until this point. The sequence violates the 180-degree line several times, yet these violations are in the minority compared to the shots (showing Bates at the left and Crane at the right of the frame) which in fact *do* set up coherent spatial relations between the characters. In summary, all of these potentially excessive moments work towards the heightening – rather than displacement – of narrative tensions, however extreme they may appear to be. As Kinder notes in her work on excess in mainstream cinema:

Action sequences function like performative ‘numbers’, interrupting the linear drive of the plot with their sensational audio and visual spectacle yet simultaneously serving as dramatic climaxes that advance the story towards closure. Because these violent numbers are so excessive, their rhythmic representation so kinetic and their visceral pleasures so compelling, their cumulative effect provides a rival mode of orchestration that threatens to usurp the narrative’s traditional function of contextualisation through a seriality and an exuberance that render the film comic, no matter how painful, tragic or satiric its narrative resolution may be.

(2001, p.68)

The key point at hand here is that the excessive elements of violent scenes are by no means limited to the *filone* and indeed present a constant threat to diegetic stability throughout the mainstream genre film. Nonetheless, that these moments of excess primarily work to heighten the “drama” of dramatic climaxes and thus support the films’ fundamental *storytelling* function suggests that they are merely aspects of “style” within a narrative-supporting formal system.

Another central issue raised by Kinder’s quote is her description of violent scenes as “performative numbers”; a term that explicitly aligns them with scenes of spectacle, singing and dancing in the Hollywood musical. The musical⁵¹ provides a more immediate point of comparison with the *filone* than the other genres examined, for both have been typically criticised (and, until relatively recently, academically marginalised) for their deviance from established norms of narrative and realism: as Altman notes, the musical has often been “denigrated as hollow, silly and escapist” (1981, p.4). Furthermore, films like *Singin’ in the Rain* (USA, Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen, 1952) are similarly defined by – and were typically “sold” to their audiences based on⁵² – the foregrounding of cinematic excess and potential for “escapism” that they offered. Finally, as Feuer notes, the musical stands apart from the other genres discussed by eschewing, in much the same way as the *filoni*, the Western and gangster film’s thematic predilection with issues of American history, identity and

⁵¹ To prevent confusion, from this point onwards my use the term “musical” will be synonymous with “Hollywood musical” unless explicitly stated otherwise.

⁵² The original theatrical posters for the film emphasised this escapism and the carefree, light-hearted tone of the film by presenting a shot of the film’s three central characters in raincoats – dancing with umbrellas in tandem and smiling – against a plain blue and white, unconstrained backdrop, the tagline above them in a similarly playful font reading “What a glorious feeling”.

society in favour of a less “serious” focus on the American entertainment industry itself (1977, p.313).

The musical’s narrative structure presents a productive analogy with the *filone*, for it is also constructed round a series of scenes of spectacle – the song and dance numbers – that occupy a similarly prioritised position within the films. Whereas the potential of cinematic excess to disrupt narration and distance the spectator from immersion in a film’s plot is generally kept in check by the other genres described, on the contrary the musical seems designed to *celebrate* excess through its extravagant and heavily-stylised numbers. This is not to assume that cinematic excess is completely unregulated and allowed free reign in the musical, however. As excessive as the genre’s song and dance sequences are, their potential to threaten narrative stability is habitually neutralised by the musical’s containment and heavily codified distribution of these scenes within the film as a whole: as Sutton notes, “the plot itself [...] surrounds, regulates and keeps in check the voluptuous, non-realist excesses of the number” (1981, p.192). Song and dance numbers in the musical do not threaten narrative cohesion, because they are clearly *demarcated* as song and dance numbers by the text; protracted moments where film narration pauses and changes its mode of address. In addition, these scenes are *formally* regulated by the films and divided off from the dialogue and narrative scenes surrounding them, using what Mellencamp describes as “bracketing mechanisms” (1977, p.32) to make their modal shifts between narrative and excess scripts completely clear to the spectator. These mechanisms are created by a number of formal conventions: the presence of a diegetic audience; the opening or closing of a curtain; the appearance of a character on stage; the emergence of non-diegetic music – each of these works to “open” or “close” the numbers, explicitly signalling the points at which narrative is to give way to excess. The assorted expressionistic miscellanea of the song and dance sequence – characters singing along with a non-diegetic soundtrack, self-consciously rhythmic editing and camera movement, the prioritising of foot-tapping sounds in the sonic hierarchy and characters directly addressing the camera, for example – would create attractions (and threaten incoherence) within the context of a typical *narrative* scene, where such excess is minimised. In song and dance numbers, however – even those which begin

“spontaneously” during dialogue scenes⁵³ – the use of formal brackets isolates such potentially disruptive elements from the main narrative: as Feuer observes, “the interruption disturbs the equilibrium of the unitary flow of the narrative but [...] in an entirely conventionalised manner” (1982, pp.68-69).

This view of narrative and numbers as diametrically opposed opposites is problematised, however, by a number of critical approaches which lay stress on the *integration* of these numbers to the narratives within which they are contained, not to mention with the wider thematic discourses of the other genres examined. There is clearly more at stake in the musical’s sequences than the simple enjoyment of spectacle: numbers may, in Mellencamp’s terms, “momentarily displace or halt the forward movement of the diegesis” (1977, p.32), but in fact they recurrently act as *in miniature* dramatisations of larger narrative conflicts. Although violent acts are the principal means by which equilibrium is disrupted and re-established in genres like the western and gangster film, in the musical such (dis)equilibria are primarily influenced, as Neale observes, by “the eruption of (hetero)sexual desire into an already firmly established social order” (1980, p.21): the primary “job” of numbers is not to resolve but instead present, reiterate and comment on these equilibria and disequilibria. The musical is thus typified by what Altman labels its “dual focus” structure (1989, p.21): identifying, like Neale, the heterosexual romance as fundamental to the musical’s narrative, he suggests that the musical’s narrative is built round the formal alternation between scenes which focus on the male lead and scenes focusing on his female counterpart. As a result, the central thematic conflict articulated by the musical is not between civilisation and wilderness, law and order or society and the monster: it is the conflict between *male and female* that is being addressed, and the musical numbers accordingly “[fashion] a myth out of the American courtship ritual” (1981, p.207). As Altman points out:

[In the musical] we alternate between the male focus and the female focus, working our way through a prepackaged love story whose dynamic principle remains the difference between male and female. Each segment must be understood not in terms of the segments to

⁵³ Feuer talks at greater length on the “myth” of such spontaneity in the musical, laying emphasis on the ways in which scenes like this – particularly in *Singin’ in the Rain* – often quite self-consciously foreground their artificial nature and are therefore “bracketed” in a similar manner (1981, pp.162-3).

which it is causally related but by comparison to the segment which it parallels.

(1989, p.20)

Another key similarity between Altman's schema and the genre perspectives discussed earlier is the emphasis in *dualistic structures* that they display. As Altman observes elsewhere, mainstream genre films regularly depend upon either two protagonists or an additional *antagonist*: the western hero is pitted against an evil mercenary in a climactic shootout; the central character of the horror film finally confronts the monster at the end of the film; the two romantic leads of the musical finally come together in song and dance sequence that closes the film (1999, p.24). Mainstream narration therefore typically employs what Bordwell calls:

[...] a double causal structure, two plot lines: one involving heterosexual romance (boy / girl, husband / wife), the other line involving another sphere – work, war, a mission or quest, other personal relationships.

(1985, p.157)

Where these genres differ from the musical, however, is through the central narrative *function* of numbers in the films. Although their individual functions are often different, violent “numbers” in the western, horror film and gangster film are principally agents of *causality*, presenting decisive narrative loci where plot is advanced through the instigation and resolution of conflicts through violence. They are, as a result, quite firmly integrated within and integral to plot. In contrast to this, the musical's spectacular numbers work in a far more symbolic manner, commenting on and highlighting, rather than explicitly *causing*, the films' decisive plot developments. This idea is also expounded by Dyer, who depicts the musical's numbers as moments of *escapism*, where a temporary freedom from the problems presented by the narrative (and by everyday life) is presented. As Dyer suggests:

The numbers embody (capitalist) palliatives to the problems of the narrative – chiefly, abundance (spectacle) in place of poverty, and [...] energy [...] in place of dispiritedness.

(1977, p.27)

For Dyer, musicals are marked by a level of *integration* between their narrative and number scenes; the latter working as utopian solutions to the problems presented in

the former. The spectacles offered by the genre may be founded on escapism, but this is not an escape from narrative structure so much as it is a recalibration of oppositions within the narrative itself. Drawing this together, numbers are not as integrated with narrative in the musical as the violent “numbers” of the other genres, but their integration is nonetheless fundamental to narrative: narration does not stop altogether in these scenes, but continues through the thematic and symbolic aspects of the numbers themselves. That Dyer’s quote explicitly places *spectacle* within this context also helps explain how such excesses are mediated and controlled via their integration with narrative.

This idea of numbers being intrinsically linked to thematic concerns has also been extended to those spectacular genres existing *outside* the mainstream: in her work on Bollywood action cinema, for example, Gopalan suggests that the frequent song and dance numbers serve to dramatise and foreground tensions present in the plot (2002, p.19). This idea is echoed by Jha, who argues that such sequences in fact *clarify* the narratives that they interrupt, “[providing] insight into an otherwise incoherent narrative” (2003). Williams also takes a similar viewpoint to the integration of sexual “numbers” with the porn film narrative, using Altman’s dual focus model (as well as Dyer’s arguments) to suggest that sex scenes work to resolve thematic binary oppositions – men and women; polygamy and monogamy; sex and love – while representing their own escapist sexual “utopias” in the process. Drawing out a fascinating taxonomy of the porn film’s different numbers and comparing them to the various duets, ensemble dances and solo numbers of the musical itself, Williams identifies four different functions that they can have:

In hard-core narrative we might say that sex numbers can function in the following ways: (1) as regular moments of pleasure that may be gratifying either to viewers or to the characters performing the acts; (2) as statements of sexual conflicts that are manifest in the number; [...] (3) as statements, or restatements, of conflicts that are manifest in the narrative; or (4) as resolutions of conflicts stated either in the narrative or in other numbers.

(1989, p.134)

The dualistic approach taken by Williams and Altman provides a very useful way of looking at numbers that will colour subsequent discussion of the *filone*’s own scenes of excessive violence and spectacle. As I shall now begin to illustrate, however, such

models primarily highlight the fact that the *filone* numbers' contribution to the resolution of narrative and thematic conflicts is far more tenuous and frequently threatens diegetic stability.

4.3 Narrative and Excess in *Uomini si nasce poliziotti si muore* and *Solamente Nero*

Poliziotteschi Uomini si nasce poliziotti si muore and *giallo Solamente Nero* work as fascinating companion pieces not only due to the archetypal nature of their structure, but also as a result of their contrasting approaches to the police procedural narrative. Released two years apart (in 1976 and 1978 respectively) during the heyday of the *poliziotteschi* and *giallo*, both films foreground the central obsessions of their own cycle: corrupt police officers, car chases, vigilante cops and gunfights in the former; black-gloved killers, amateur detectives, innocent eyewitnesses and cod-Freudian psychology in the latter.⁵⁴ More crucially, however, the central contrast that they provide is one of narrative *emphasis*. Of all the major and minor *filone* cycles examined for this thesis, the *giallo* stands out the most by virtue of its typical foregrounding of specifically *narrative* viewing pleasures – arising chiefly from its variations of the “whodunit” paradigm and ensuing emphasis on suspense – that do not exist to the same extent in the other *filoni*. *Solamente*'s comparatively strong emphasis on these pleasures therefore presents a useful narrative structure against which *Uomini*'s many incoherences can be contrasted with and problematised.

Narrative Structures

Set in 1970s Rome during the festive period, *Uomini* follows the exploits of Fred, played by French actor Marc Porel, and Tony, played by Italian, Ray Lovelock: two detectives who form part of a “special undercover squad” created by the police to combat crime in the city. The squad, headed up by “the Captain” (played by Adolfo

⁵⁴ A more detailed study of the *gialli*, their origins and different variants can be found in Mikel Koven's *La Dolce Morte: Vernacular Cinema and the Italian Giallo Film* (2006), itself the first book-length academic study of this particular cycle. See also Needham (2003) and Mendik (1996).

Celi), have been trying for years to arrest Roberto Pasquini (veteran Italian actor, Renato Salvatori), a ruthless Mafia boss who runs gambling rackets across Rome, and the narrative charts their various attempts to find him. After Pasquini's men kill another member of their squad, Rick (Marino Masé), Fred and Tony try to hit back: often breaking the rules of police procedure by beating up, bribing, torturing and even killing villains, their actions cause increasing aggravation to the Captain who insists a more measured and "by the book" approach is required. Ironically, it is this approach which eventually saves the lives of the detectives, who in the final scene walk into a trap laid by Pasquini (a boat laden with explosives): before Pasquini can detonate the explosives, however, he is shot dead by the Captain, who appears from the shadows to draw the narrative to a close.

Solamente's narrative is altogether more complex and focuses on the experiences of Stefano D'Archelangelo (played by Lino Capoliccio) a professor of neurology who, feeling "washed out" after working too much, returns from Rome to holiday in his hometown of Venice with his brother, Paolo (a priest, played by American Craig Hill). On the first night of Stefano's stay, Paolo witnesses a brutal strangling from the window of his bedroom: this murder sets off a chain of events involving the initial victim, a local psychic medium who blackmails her clients; a back-street abortionist and her mad son; a gay child-abusing count; a doctor with a murderous past and a gambling addiction and a disabled artist whose sinister painting – and the disorientating mental "attacks" that Stefano begins to experience after the murder – are key to revealing the killer's identity. As the film progresses, the killer strikes another four times before the final scene, where Stefano finally makes sense of his attacks and identifies the murderer as Paolo himself. To clarify this further, Figures 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 (on the follow pages) provide scene-by-scene summaries of each film: as well as charting out the central narrative developments of *Uomini* and *Solamente*, these summaries have the more exact purpose of allowing me to refer to specific scenes and add clarity to my points about the narrative structures and rhythms of the films.

Figure 4.3.1 Scene-by-Scene Overview of *Uomini si nasce poliziotti si muore*

| Scene | Time | Location | Description | Duration |
|-------|----------|------------------------------------|--|----------|
| 1. | 00:00 | City streets, day | Credits sequence: Fred and Tony are riding on a motorbike through Rome, passing by Christmas decorations. | 2'12" |
| 2. | 00:02:12 | Bank / city streets / suburbs, day | <p>A woman walks out of a bank and is attacked by a motorcyclist thief, who grabs her purse and assaults her. Fred and Tony arrive on their motorcycle, the thieves drive off, and Fred gives chase. Tony grabs a nearby motorbike and also follows the thieves.</p> <p>The chase goes through streets, crowded piazzas and out into the suburbs; Fred and Tony eventually catch up with the thieves and force their bike to crash into a truck. One of the thieves dies during the crash when he is impaled by the truck's handbrake, the other when Fred breaks his neck.</p> | 9'21" |
| 3. | 00:10:33 | Suburbs, day | Time has passed: a crowd has gathered around the bodies of the thieves and the uniformed police have arrived. One of the policemen asks Fred and Tony what they know, and Fred replies "Everything; the report will be up to us" before driving off on the same bike as Tony. | 44" |
| 4. | 00:11:17 | Police station, day | Fred and Tony arrive at their police station; they flirt with the secretary, Norma, and ask her repeatedly which one of them she is going to have sex with first. Norma teases them back and questions their virility before telling them that three "radical professionals" plan to rob a jewellery shop. | 2'25" |
| 5. | 00:13:42 | Outside police station, day | Rick, another undercover detective, arrives at the station in his car. He is followed by two gangsters in a car and one on a motorbike. Once Rick has entered the building one of the gangsters slashes the tyres of his car then hides round the corner, waiting for him. | 56" |
| 6. | 00:14:38 | Police station, day | <p>Rick enters the office and boasts to Fred and Tony that he has nearly caught Roberto Pasquini, one of the big Mafia bosses. He has set up an introduction with Pasquini, and thinks he can bust him as a result.</p> <p>As the gangsters wait outside, the three detectives speak to the Captain, who reminds them that their project – a "special undercover squad" – is a big drain on the police's finances. They have a computer that can predict and locate suspects, and he chastises Fred and Tony for not respecting the computer and proper police procedure, for using "unverified" sources (informants) and leaving "two or three pulverised cadavers" after every bust. He then tells them that their behaviour is making his life a misery as he constantly has to fabricate reports which clear the detectives of any wrongdoing.</p> <p>They discuss Pasquini, whose major racket is</p> | 4'21" |

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| | | | <p>gambling. Rick has met a number of suspects in the last week, and has made a point of using the proper computer procedure to file all this information. The police have been looking for Pasquini for three years and he has eluded them, much to the Captain's chagrin.</p> <p>The Captain asks Fred and Tony what happened outside the bank that morning – they lie to him and in doing so obviously confuse their stories: the captain shakes his head in disbelief and kicks them out. Fred flirts some more with Norma.</p> | |
| 7. | 00:18:59 | Outside police station | <p>Rick walks out to his car and is shot in the chest by one of the waiting gangsters. Fred and Tony arrive on their bike and one of the gangsters kicks their bike over – they shoot him in the back as he escapes, his bike careers into an oncoming car, and the car crushes him to death. Rick dies, and the detectives stand over his body.</p> | 1'40" |
| 8. | 00:20:39 | Outside Pasquini's gambling den | <p>Fred and Tony, dressed in suits, arrive at a gambling den – described as “the apple of Pasquini's eye” – in their car. Mentioning that this den belongs to “the ruling classes”, they walk straight up to the door and beat up the bouncers before handcuffing them, laying them on the grass and pouring petrol around them. Fred and Tony then pour petrol over a number of expensive cars – including a Rolls Royce – and set them alight, before also setting the circle of gasoline around the bouncers alight. Cars begin to explode; Fred and Tony notice that they've accidentally destroyed their own car, laugh, and begin to walk home.</p> | 5'13" |
| 9. | 00:25:52 | Disused waste ground, day | <p>Pasquini is talking to a corrupt cop, trying to work out who destroyed the cars and upset his operation the night before. He gives the corrupt cop a wad of notes, and asks for more information on the special squad. The cop tells Pasquini that he knows everything: Pasquini orders him to make a report and identify them.</p> | 2'13" |
| 10. | 00:28:05 | Fred and Tony's house, day | <p>Fred and Tony (who evidently share a room and a flat), wake up. The doorbell rings, and their female cleaner (Rosa) arrives with a newspaper: the detectives read it and discuss the “reviews “of “last night's show”.</p> <p>Fred and Tony attempt to wind up Rosa by insinuating that they had sex with her niece the week before – she throws a china jug at them as they run off, giggling.</p> | 2'33" |
| 11. | 00:30:38 | Suburban house, day | <p>A siege situation has begun at a home in the suburbs: three men have taken a woman hostage and the home is surrounded by police and a large crowd. The woman is hysterical and two of the men beat her up in an attempt to silence her. One of the men walks out with the hostage, demands a getaway car from the police, “a new model, a good make”, before coming in and</p> | 10'36" |

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| | | | <p>beating her up some more.</p> <p>Fred and Tony arrive, and Tony drives their getaway car to the front of the house. The villains come out with the woman, but retreat when they notice a police helicopter circling above. As they walk back into the house, Fred crashes through the window on a motorcycle and shoots two of the men (including one who raises his hands and says “don’t shoot! I surrender!”) while Tony shoots the other in the back of his head.</p> | |
| 12. | 00:41:14 | Abandoned warehouse, day | Two of Pasquini’s men are beating up a “junkie”, Morandi, who has given Fred and Tony compromising information. “For the story you told the police, you’ll remember what it cost you for as long as you live”, says Pasquini, and one of his men gouges Morandi’s eye out. | 1’53” |
| 13. | 00:43:07 | Lina’s house / Phone box, day | Lina, (Pasquini’s sister) answers the phone: it’s her brother, who talks to her light-heartedly about some money he’s given her as a present. He arranges to meet her in her house later, then ends the call. | 1’12” |
| 14. | 00:44:19 | Police station, day | <p>Fred and Tony are talking to the Captain. He congratulates them for catching the leader of the siege (“Ruggerini”), whose mug shot is on the wall of the office. The Captain is very critical of their methods, however, and chastises them for endangering the innocent woman during the siege. He then gives Fred and Tony the address of Lina’s flat.</p> <p>The phone rings, and the Captain identifies (presumably via his computerised methods) that five bandits (the “Rico gang”) are about to rob a bank vehicle in Rome and will meet at noon in a nearby café. He tells Fred and Tony that it’s not their problem – they point out that the Rico gang have killed four people already, and complain about “their” business being farmed off to other police divisions.</p> <p>Fred and Tony tell the captain that they are going for a “coffee break” and leave the police station.</p> | 2’53” |
| 15. | 00:47:12 | Café / outside bank, day | Fred and Tony drinking coffee in the café, looking across the road at the bank building. They notice five suspicious-looking men hanging around the bank. As the bank vehicle pulls up, Fred shoots one of the men in the head and Tony shoots the other in the chest. The other three suspicious-looking men pull on balaclavas and are shot dead (before they even commit a crime) by Fred and Tony, who calmly get on their motorbike and drive off past the bodies. | 4’20” |
| 16. | 00:51:32 | Lina’s house, day | Fred and Tony arrive at Lina’s block of flats and threaten the doorman, who tells them where she stays. Lina’s cousin (Maricca) answers the door: the detectives push their way past her and | 7’15” |

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| | | | question Lina, who is drying her hair in her bedroom and refuses to tell them where Pasquini is. Lina insults Fred's mother and he slaps her in the face: Lina then falls onto her bed, partially clothed, and pulls Fred on top of her. Fred has sex with Lina while Tony talks to Maricca next door: hearing the loud moaning through the wall, Tony takes off his jacket and asks Maricca if he can go into the room. "That girl is as good as gold...only, <i>she likes it</i> ", Maricca jokes and sends Tony in to have sex with Lina. They have sex while Maricca cooks lunch for Fred; the moaning continues. | |
| 17. | 00:58:47 | Police station, day | Fred and Tony meet the Captain, who is very angry with them and their "criminal conduct" after the siege. "When you were tested for the special squad, every test revealed that your basic traits are criminal", he argues, and blames them for his increasing stress. As "punishment" he restricts them exclusively to Pasquini's case, and gives them a tip-off for the address of the new gambling den, emphasising that the detectives take time to set up a trail and follow procedure to find it. | 2'1" |
| 18. | 01:00:48 | Gambling den, night | Fred and Tony arrive at the new gambling den, which has been set up on the riverside. They burst in and capture two of Pasquini's henchmen before repeatedly punching and kicking them. Hanging both of the henchmen by cuffs from the roof, Fred and Tony play a hand of poker before torturing the henchmen – squeezing their testicles. The henchmen reveal that in truth they know nothing about Pasquini's whereabouts: despite having accepted this, Tony squeezes their testicles again as Fred observes "don't leave any marks" before punching them repeatedly. | 4'47" |
| 19. | 01:05:35 | Tram car, day | Maricca gets onto a tram and meets Pasquini: she describes Fred and Tony to him before inconspicuously getting off the tram. Pasquini and his men get off at the next stop: he then meets the corrupt cop (who has just learned that he is about to be transferred) and urges him to identify the special squad. | 3'26" |
| 20. | 01:09:01 | Quarry, day | Fred and Tony are practicing their aim by shooting soup and soft drinks cans in a quarry. Four of Pasquini's men arrive and attempt to ambush them. A shootout ensues, where Fred shoots three of them and Tony shoots one. | 4'17" |
| 21. | 01:13:18 | Police station, day | The Captain tells Fred and Tony that their cover has obviously been blown, and urges them to stay away from the police station and their own home. "Eliminate him before he eliminates us", says Fred. | 36" |
| 22. | 01:13:54 | Racetrack, day | Fred and Tony go to a greyhound race and speak to one of the dog trainers – one of Pasquini's enemies. They bribe him in an attempt to find the location of Morandi the junkie, who has run up debts with Pasquini since his eye was gouged out and is | 5'2" |

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| | | | consequently marked for death. | |
| 23. | 01:18:56 | Morandi's flat, day | Fred and Tony arrive in Morandi's flat. Tony talks to Morandi's wife while Fred gives him a wad of money to pay off his debt, in return for telling the detectives where and when he plans to meet Pasquini to hand over the money. | 2'33" |
| 24. | 01:21:29 | Pasquini's boat, day | Pasquini's Swedish "girlfriend" is attempting to get a tan , topless, on Pasquini's fishing boat. Mordandi arrives to pay Pasquini's henchman off, but insists on seeing Pasquini face-to-face. As Morandi walks off, it is revealed that Pasquini has been in the boat all along. | 2'28" |
| 25. | 01:23:57 | Telephone box / Morandi's house, day | Fred and Tony are waiting beside a phone box beside the motorway: Morandi phones and tells them that he will be meeting Pasquini later on at the boat. | 1'41" |
| 26. | 01:25:38 | Pasquini's boat / boat shed, day | Morandi arrives at the boat while Fred and Tony hide in the bushes. They grab the Swedish girl and take her down to the ship's cabin before waiting for Pasquini to arrive. Meanwhile, Pasquini and one of his men are watching from a nearby boat shed: they have primed the boat with explosives and are ready to destroy it with the detectives, Morandi and the Swede inside. As Pasquini's henchman starts to push the detonator's plunger, he is shot dead by the captain – who has seemingly been hiding in the shed all along. The Captain shoots Pasquini dead, then drives off in his car. The characters leave the boat, and as the detectives try to accost the captain he shouts "a trail takes preparation.... see?", before leaving. Fred and Tony then decide to blow the boat up anyway, and both of them push down the plunger. The film ends on a freeze-frame of the boat exploding, then the title card "FINE". | 4'1" |
| 27. | 01:29:39 | Film Ends | | |

Figure 4.3.2 Scene-by-Scene Overview of *Solamente Nero*

| Scene | Time | Location | Description | Duration |
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| 1. | 00:00:00 | Field by monastery, day | Pre-credits sequence: a young schoolgirl is throttled by an unseen assailant. As she falls to the ground, a book falls to the ground and a close-up shows her hand full of torn pages. | 1'7" |
| 2. | 00:01:07 | Field by monastery, day | The image (of the girl's body in the foreground and the monastery in the background) freezes and the titles begin. | 1'15" |
| 3. | 00:02:22 | Train carriage, night | Stefano is in a train carriage, reading. A girl walks in, and as he is helping her with her case Stefano drops it. The girl looks bored, so Stefano gives her his magazine to read – some time elapses and they talk some more. The girl is a painter, and lives on one of the islands near Venice. | 2'54" |
| 4. | 00:05:18 | Venice, day | Stefano and girl are on ferry to Venice. He is met on the jetty by his priest brother, Paulo, and the church's sacristan, Gasparre. Paulo laughs with Stefano about the girl ("you're a fast worker") and expresses concern at his brother's lighter weight, suggesting that a good meal will sort him out. The girl walks away and talks to someone on the phone. | 1'38" |
| 5. | 00:06:56 | Toni's restaurant, day | Stefano and Paulo are talking whilst eating lunch. Stefano confesses that he is feeling "washed out" after working too hard at his university. As they talk, the emphasis shifts to another woman who is sitting at a nearby table – she is given an envelope of money by a young man. Stefano asks about the woman: Paulo says that the woman is a medium, "who practices strange rites in her house", and he identifies three characters who regularly join her séances, the first being Doctor Aloisi, a renowned gambler, atheist and enemy of Paulo who is suspected of having murdered his wife. It transpires that Aloisi is in fact at the other table while Paulo is talking, and he storms off after hearing this conversation. | 3'20" |
| 6. | 00:10:16 | Streets, day | Stefano and Paulo are walking down the street chatting. Paulo continues to speak about the psychic's other two visitors: one is Signora Nardi, a midwife, who has a "crazy son" locked in her house and is suspected of performing illegal abortions; the other is Count Pedrazzi, a "despicable individual... without morals". Paulo stresses that it might be better if Pedrazzi "disappeared from the face of the earth", and hints that Pedrazzi is a child molester. | 1'4" |
| 7. | 00:11:20 | Medium's house, time undefined | Medium and three characters (Aloisi, Pedrazzi and Nardi) are conducting séance in a darkened room with paraphernalia such as skulls placed around. They are holding hands, and a tape-recorder is shown underneath the table in close-up. | 1'28" |

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| 8. | 00:12:48 | Church quarters, night | Paolo shows Stefano his room, which is on the floor below Paolo's own bedroom. | 26" |
| 9. | 00:13:14 | Outside church / night | It's now raining heavily and there is a thunderstorm: the medium walks through the courtyard opposite the church and is attacked. Paolo hears the noise and looks out his window to see someone in a black hooded cowl attacking the medium. The leather-gloved killer strangles the medium: Paolo runs into Stefano's room but he is not there. Gasparre and Stefano arrive and Paolo tells them what he has seen. The men go outside to examine the body but it is not there – "it was probably just a couple fighting", says Stefano. | 3'29" |
| 10. | 00:16:43 | Paolo's bedroom, night | Paolo is in bed ruminating. | 16" |
| 11. | 00:16:59 | Medium's house, night | Prowling point-of-view shots of black-gloved killer rummaging through the medium's house. The killer finds a tape recording and diary, and steals them. | 48" |
| 12. | 00:17:47 | Paolo's bedroom, day | Paolo wakes up to find a note that has been placed under his door. It reads "IF ONE SPEAKS OF MURDER, YOURS WILL BE TALKED ABOUT" and is accompanied by a photo of a young Paolo, Stefano and their mother. | 46" |
| 13. | 00:18:33 | Stefano's bedroom, day | Paolo shows the note and the photo to Stefano. "The killer thinks I saw him from the window... I wasn't able to recognise him". Paolo wants to go to the police but Stefano tells him to hold on rather than endanger himself. Gasparre arrives and tells Paolo that the body of a woman has been found nearby by the authorities. | 53" |
| 14. | 00:19:26 | Alleyway, day | Policemen are examining body, and decide that she was strangled after putting up a fight. An onlooker remarks that it was the medium who was murdered. Paolo and Stefano arrive and look at body – the police officer links the case to that of a young girl (last name Andreani) who was strangled in a meadow years ago. Paolo reads the medium her last rites, but as he is doing this Stefano has an "attack": some kind of flashback to shots of a screaming boy (shot in slow-motion and of a similar mise-en-scène to that of the pre-credits murder). | 1'44" |
| 15. | 00:21:10 | Church, day | Paolo is in the church – a woman confronts him and tells him that Pedrazzi has been trying to molest her son. | 26" |
| 16. | 00:21:36 | Pedrazzi's house, day | Paolo arrives at Pedrazzi's house where he is met by Pedrazzi's homosexual butler, Thomas. Pedrazzi is watching a young boy play piano and stroking the boy's shoulders. Paolo confronts Pedrazzi, accusing him of being a paedophile: they have a heated argument and Pedrazzi orders him away, calling him a "hypocrite". Once Paolo has gone, Pedrazzi gets Thomas to make him a drink before making sexual advances towards him, which are | 3'57" |

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| | | | rejected. | |
| 17. | 00:25:33 | Streets, day | Stefano is walking through the streets. The locals look at him through their windows. One of them drops a sheet on his head accidentally from her window. | 1'26" |
| 18. | 00:26:59 | Streets, day | Later, Stefano is still walking and notices the girl. She reveals that she is also an interior decorator and was born in Venice. | 1'18" |
| 19. | 00:28:17 | Streets, day | Later, Stefano and the girl are walking – he introduces himself and she introduces herself as Sandra. They discuss the medium, and Sandra insinuates that the medium used to blackmail her clients after hearing their confessions during séance. | 51" |
| 20. | 00:29:08 | Outside Toni's, day | Later, Stefano and Sandra continue to walk through the streets and stop outside Toni's, still talking. Sandra has asked Stefano to come to her flat for dinner. Signora Nardi walks past and speaks to Sandra briefly. There is a shift in emphasis to a haggard old man standing outside Toni's and looking in the window. Toni notices him, calling him "Andreani" (the father of the murdered schoolgirl) and trying to offer him a drink. Andreani blanks him, turns his head sombrely and walks away. | 1'35" |
| 21. | 00:30:43 | Paolo's room, day | Stefano tells Paolo that he's found a note in the church. The note reads "THE PAST AND YOUR FATE ARE LINKED WITH DEATH": Paolo becomes agitated and stressed – he then says to Stefano "since you arrived, unheard of things have started". Stefano placates him, telling him not to worry. | 1'19" |
| 22. | 00:32:01 | Streets / ferry, day | Sandra is walking through the streets and takes the ferry across town. Point-of-view shots of her suggest that she is being followed. | 2'39" |
| 23. | 00:34:40 | Streets, day | Sandra continues to walk through the alleyways of Venice. Again the point-of-view of a pursuer is shown: she screams in fright when an accordion player surprises her by coming out of one of the alleys. She walks up the stairs and is surprised by her pursuer – Stefano, who has been following her since she got on the boat. "I wanted to surprise you, he says". She takes him into her flat. | 2'57" |
| 24. | 00:37:37 | Sandra's flat, day | Sandra shows Stefano her flat, and introduces her stepmother – a painter, who is ill and largely bed-ridden. Stefano notices a sinister painting of the stepmother's on the wall, showing a young boy in front of a monastery (similar to that of the pre-credits sequence) being attacked by demons. Stefano is introduced to Sandra's stepmother, who says what a kind man Paolo is. Stefano looks at the painting again, and apologises for surprising her, before leaving. | 2'51" |
| 25. | 00:40:28 | Aloisi's surgery, day | Aloisi prescribes pills to an old fisherman. Signora Nardi then arrives and talks to Aloisi about the murder. Andreani then arrives, and Nardi leaves, awkwardly. | 1'14" |

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| 26. | 00:41:42 | Nardi's house, day | Nardi is at home, and refuses to answer the door when two policemen come knocking to question her about the murder. | 54" |
| 27. | 00:42:36 | Sandra's flat, evening | Stefano is helping Sandra move furniture in her flat. They talk about university, and Stefano describes how Paolo was kicked out of university for arguing with his professors and classmates. While they are talking, Sandra remembers the cake she has been baking – which is now burned. They laugh, and Stefano has another “attack”, flashing back to the same images of the screaming boy as before. | 1'58" |
| 28. | 00:44:34 | Sandra's flat, evening | Later on, Stefano has recovered from the attack but is still feeling drained. He apologises and leaves, promising to call Sandra tomorrow. | 35" |
| 29. | 00:45:09 | Pedrazzi's house, evening | Pedrazzi is having dinner, and argues with Thomas, who insists that he has more time off. Pedrazzi again tries to make advances towards him and calls Thomas a “whore”: Thomas storms out, leaving Pedrazzi on his own. Hearing a noise, Pedrazzi goes to investigate: again the killer is shown watching him through a point-of-view shot: as Pedrazzi is walking around the house looking for the killer, the (largely unseen) killer stabs him through the chest with a sword. As Pedrazzi dies he clearly recognises who killed him. | 5'10" |
| 30. | 00:50:19 | Police office, day | A police officer is on the phone, and reveals that Pedrazzi was murdered and that his house was rifled in the process. | 48" |
| 31. | 00:51:07 | Church, day | Paolo is giving communion in church – he reaches into the communion box for wafers and wine and finds a blood-splattered sheep's head and accompanying note reading “PRIEST REMEMBER – SILENCE IS LIFE”. He carries on the communion, pretending that nothing has happened. | 1'2" |
| 32. | 00:52:09 | Paolo's study, day | Paolo shows the note to Stefano, and confesses that he fears for his life. Stefano thinks it may be the “work of some crank” and examines the notes. While he is doing this he notices something interesting – the typewritten letters that Paolo has received are written with a distinctive letter “T”, implying that they were all typed on the same typewriter. Stefano suspects that these murders are linked to the original murder of the Andreani girl, and decides to go and speak to her parents. | 1'56" |
| 33. | 00:54:05 | Andreani's boatyard, day | Stefano meets Andreani and asks him about his daughter's death. He refuses to say anything, and it is implied that he wants to be left alone: Andreani assures Stefano that he should leave the case well alone, suggesting that he himself may be getting intimidated. | 1'14" |
| 34. | 00:55:29 | Paolo's study / church, night | Paolo is eating his dinner. He hears a disturbance in the church and goes to investigate. As he looks around, one of the large stone ornaments – a statue of Jesus on the cross – comes loose of its fitting and falls on him, narrowly missing him. | 3'36" |

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| 35. | 00:59:05 | Streets, day | Paolo and Stefano are talking in the street – Stefano says that the “accident” was definitely a murder attempt, and says that the police suspect either Aloisi or Nardi. | 52” |
| 36. | 00:59:57 | Venetian waterways, day | Stefano and Sandra are riding on a speedboat around the waterways, having a great time and giggling. | 1’42” |
| 37. | 01:01:39 | Sandra’s flat, day | Sandra and Stefano are drying off after the boat ride. They talk before kissing for the first time, moving to a sheepskin rug in front of the fireplace to have sex. | 2’35” |
| 38. | 01:04:14 | Sandra’s flat, night | Later on, Sandra’s stepmother is on her own in a wheelchair. The killer is introduced via another series of point-of-view shots. The killer is looking around the darkened house with a torch, and eventually finds the sinister painting from before, taking it off the wall. The killer then attacks the stepmother – who clearly recognises him / her – dragging her into the lounge in her chair before throwing her, face-first, into the open fire and holding her head while she burns to death. | 2’45” |
| 39. | 01:07:01 | Nardi’s house, day | Signora Nardi walks into the room of her “crazy” son, who Paolo mentioned earlier. She tries to feed him but he is increasingly distressed because of a baby doll that he has in his bedroom. Nardi stops him crying by “punishing” the doll, “Miriam”, ripping her arms and legs off and poking her eyes out while her son giggles. He then grabs the doll from his mother and she tries to calm him down while he sobs on the bed. | 2’55” |
| 40. | 01:09:56 | Sandra’s flat, evening | Stefano is trying to console Sandra, who is trying to work out a motive for her stepmother’s murder. Suggesting that the painting has something to do with it, she looks through a book of photographs that her stepmother kept of all her paintings. They look at the painting and Stefano says “I’m sure I’ve seen the setting before”. Stefano has to leave, he has a meeting with his old university professor. | 2’00” |
| 41. | 01:11:56 | Outside Sandra’s flat, evening | Three police officers stop their boat beside Sandra’s flat and decide to have a break. Stefano leaves the flat and walks past them. | 1’28” |
| 42. | 01:13:24 | Sandra’s flat, evening | Sandra is listening to the radio and painting in her flat. The killer is introduced in Sandra’s flat via point-of-view shots. He / she sneaks around the flat, finds the book of photos and rips out the page with the sinister painting on it. Sandra hears the noise and investigates... pacing around the house, she is eventually confronted by one of the police officers, who heard a disturbance, saw “a man” running from the house and came to investigate. | 4’26” |
| 43. | 01:17:50 | Sandra’s flat, morning | The next morning: Sandra and Stefano are in bed. He decides to go and see Paolo. | 39” |
| 44. | 01:18:29 | Outside church | Gasparre is refereeing a youth football game outside the church while Paolo watches. The game is stopped when one of the players gets “kicked in the nuts”, and Paolo laughs. Stefano | 1’19” |

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| | | | arrives and they have light-hearted banter about his relationship with Sandra. Nardi walks past with a young woman, and Gasparre looks suspiciously at her, indicating that the young woman could have had an illegal abortion. | |
| 45. | 01:19:50 | Aloisi's surgery, day | Aloisi is consulting with Andreani, who is complaining about stomach pains. Aloisi tells him that he will die if he doesn't stop drinking: Andreani demands pills, takes the prescription then leaves. The phone then rings, and Aloisi arranges to meet someone at the casino later. | 1'16" |
| 46. | 01:21:06 | Outside Aloisi's surgery, night | Aloisi leaves surgery then is attacked by the killer – who he recognises. The killer kicks him into the canal, and Aloisi tries to escape by swimming towards a boat and holding on to the hull. The killer grabs a nearby boat and follows him, eventually crushing Aloisi to death between the hulls of the boats. | 3'2" |
| 47. | 01:24:08 | Church, day | Gasparre is leading a prayer in church. Collecting money, Paolo notices a fourth threatening note in the collection box. The note reads: "THEN I WILL KILL YOU". | 52" |
| 48. | 01:25:00 | Cemetery, day | Paolo is talking to a grave surveyor: they discuss plans to build new crypts for the church. | 26" |
| 49. | 01:25:26 | Cemetery, night | Later on, Paolo leaves church and enters foggy cemetery. Point-of-view shot shows him being stalked by the killer who, after stalking him for some time, jumps out to confront him with a knife before running off immediately. | 2'7" |
| 50. | 01:27:19 | Sandra's flat, night | Stefano is on the phone and tells Sandra that he has to go back to Rome. He is worried about the threatening messages, and bemoans the lack of developments in the police investigation. Sandra drops her suitcase as she is packing, spilling letters over the floor. Stefano reads one of the letters and notices the distinctive typewritten letter "T" on it – he then says "Now I know who the murderer really is" before going off on his own and telling Sandra to go to Paolo. | 1'48" |
| 51. | 01:29:07 | Nardi's house / church, night | <p>Stefano arrives at Nardi's house and opens the door. The house has been ransacked: he finds a typewriter in her son's bedroom and tests it – the letter "T" is the same as that on the threatening letters. "It was Nardi who wrote it", he decides. He then finds the stolen audio tape, diary and some newspaper clippings in the same room.</p> <p>The film cross-cuts to Paolo in church: he hears a disturbance and is attacked by an assailant, who tries to throttle him.</p> <p>The film cuts back to Stefano, who is walking through the house when Nardi's body falls on top of him from a cupboard: her throat has been slashed. "Oh my God – then who killed her?", he asks, realising that Nardi is not the killer.</p> <p>The film cuts back to the church – it is Nardi's son who is trying to kill Paolo. Paolo hits him</p> | 5'30" |

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| | | | on the head with a candelabrum, knocking him out. Stefano arrives, and Paolo reveals that the son was the murderer, saying “it must be true that he’s the killer” before asserting that “even though you took the life of your mother, it’s not for us to judge you”. | |
| 52. | 01:34:37 | Outside church, night | The police and ambulance have arrived, and Nardi’s son is taken away while Sandra, Paolo and Stefano watch. The police captain tells them that he will take statements tomorrow, and that he is happy “the nightmare is over”. | 1’9” |
| 53. | 01:35:46 | Church, night | Gasparre is sitting, pensive, in the church. | 5” |
| 54. | 01:35:51 | Sandra’s flat, night | Stefano is disquieted, and thinks that something just isn’t right about the case. “I must figure that painting out” he says, and looks in Sandra’s stepmother’s book, only to find that the page has been ripped out. He then looks at the newspaper clippings and the book from Nardi’s flat: the clippings refer to the Andreani case – “Girl strangled by maniac”. The clipping has a photo of the girl’s body, framed against the monastery (as in the pre-credits). This triggers something in Stefano’s mind that correlates to the painting and his attacks: he looks through the book, notices something, then tells Sandra to “wait here” before running off. | 2’57” |
| 55. | 01:38:48 | Streets, night | Stefano runs through the streets – this is intercut with shots from his earlier attacks. | 44” |
| 56. | 01:39:32 | Church, night | <p>Paolo is praying when Stefano arrives. Stefano asks how Paolo knew Nardi was dead before the police found the body, and confronts him by saying he knows who the killer is.</p> <p>It transpires that Paolo himself is the killer – Stefano’s attacks have in fact been flashbacks, hitherto repressed by his mind and showing him as the young boy who watched his brother murder the schoolgirl.</p> <p>He then pieces the facts together, accompanied by flashback images on screen. The initial murder – which threw everyone off the scent – was in fact committed by Nardi, who was being blackmailed by the medium after confessing her illegal abortions during a séance. Nardi saw Paolo watching during the murder, and started sending him death threats – also attacking him in the cemetery and sabotaging the statue – as she was sure he would tell the police. She then raided the medium’s house, finding both the audio tapes of her confessions and Paolo’s old prayer book – an item that the police never found and that connects Paolo to the murders. The medium had found the book the day of the schoolgirl’s murder and decided to keep it as leverage against Paolo – three pages that were found in the schoolgirl’s hand had been torn from this book. Paolo was never sure which of the people who visited the medium was</p> | 7’34” |

| | | | | |
|-----|----------|-----------|--|-------|
| | | | threatening him and was therefore forced to kill all of them to protect himself from being found out. Paolo admits to the murder, and tells Stefano how “it stayed in your subconscious and you blotted it out of your mind for years”. He starts crying, and has a bizarre “vision” where he sees himself giving communion to the five people he murdered: the Andreani girl; Pedrazzi; Sandra’s stepmother; Aloisi and Nardi. Paolo then rushes to the top of the church steeple, pursued by his brother, and throws himself off to his death. The film ends as his body hits the ground with a loud crash. | |
| 57. | 01:47:07 | Credits | Static long shot of the steeple. | 1’40” |
| 58. | 01:48:47 | Film ends | | |

Two points immediately stand out from this analysis; the first being an obvious contrast in the narrative complexity of the two *filoni*. Such is the simplicity and often arbitrary nature of *Uomini*’s plot, in fact, that it is hard to impose Bordwell’s dualistic causal structure on the film with any real confidence. Outwith the central goal of the protagonists (to catch Pasquini and presumably avenge Rick’s death) there is no other “line involving another sphere”: even this supposedly “foundational” narrative is often debunked in favour of presenting ancillary scenes that fail to advance it. Furthermore, although Fred and Tony repeatedly flirt with different women across the film (in particular Norma, whose wordplay and criticism of what she calls the detective’s “phallogentrism” in scene four highlights the somewhat self-conscious nature of the film’s misogyny) and in scene sixteen both take turns having sex with Pasquini’s “nymphomaniac” sister Lina, there is no “romance” plot to run alongside and connect with *Uomini*’s central narrative.

Notably, such plots are largely absent from the *poliziotteschi*, the peplum and the western, which appeal to a specifically male audience. As noted earlier, the films from these cycles are predominantly “male” films and embody characteristically “male” themes: the glorification of male physical strength and heroism in the peplum; gun power, greed and amorality in the western; fist fighting, gun power and the ability to go outside “the system” in the *poliziotteschi*. Where women appear in these male-dominated films, they typically lack agency and are habitually portrayed as either “damsels in distress” (typically in the peplum), prostitutes or dancing-girls (in westerns and *poliziotteschi*), girlfriends (in the *poliziotteschi*) or, most commonly,

helpless victims of violence. Scene sixteen of *Uomini* quite problematically makes this clear: when Fred attempts to ask Lina about her brother's whereabouts she resists, he slaps her and she falls back onto the bed with her breasts exposed, inviting Fred to have sex with her and confirming the film's tacit assumption that women are either smart (like Norma) or simply enjoy being slapped and having sex with strangers. In fact, the *poliziotteschi* often specifically incorporate scenes where hysterical women (such as the hostage in scene eleven) are slapped in the face by a man: an act which invariably – and quite problematically – silences them.

Such incidents beg a larger examination of gender, sexuality and power relations in the *filone*: although critical accounts of the horror and *giallo* cycles typically take psychoanalytic and gender-based approaches to these films – for example Knee's (1996) work on Argento or Jenks' (1992) examination of gothic horror icon Barbara Steele – there is room for more work to be done in this area, not to mention on the varying relationships between *men* that are set up in the other three cycles examined. While films like *Uomini* clearly foreground and provide a certain narrative pleasure from the *homosocial* relationships between their characters⁵⁵ – the film could be productively examined using discussions of the “buddy movie” put forward by scholars such as Robin Wood (1986) and Tasker (1993) for example – such questions are outwith the central scope of this thesis and would take a dedicated study to be properly addressed in their own right. This is undoubtedly an area that I would like to point towards the further study of, but my central concern at this point is not with gender and sexuality in the *filoni* but the ways in which such narrative-based relations are deprioritised by excesses that often render them unimportant and even incoherent.

Although *Uomini*'s narrative distinctly lacks a coherent and consistent second sphere – be it romantic, political or otherwise – this is not true of *Solamente*, which parallels its central investigative narrative with the emergent romance plot between Stefano and Sandra. Furthermore, the film's narrative cohesion is helped by the fact that, as in

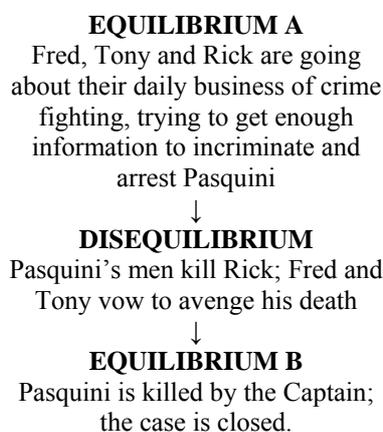
⁵⁵ This is to say nothing of the way *homosexuality* is typically repressed by the *filoni*: of the films examined for this thesis, only two – western *Se sei vivo, spara! / Django, Kill...If you Live, Shoot!* (Spain / Italy, Giulio Questi, 1967) and post-apocalyptic science-fiction film *I nuovi barbari / The New Barbarians* (Italy / USA, Enzo Girolami, 1982) – include scenes where homosexual sex takes place and both, remarkably, are rape scenes mediated almost entirely through facial close-ups. Koven in fact describes how *Solamente* reflects the “much-too-frequent equation made in [the *giallo*] between homosexuality and either child molestation and pornography” and remarks that “gay men appear as secondary characters [...] they are often camp and effeminate roles for comic relief” (2006, p.71).

musicals like *Singin in the Rain*, these two plots are inextricably linked. It is Sandra who tells Stefano in scene nineteen that the medium was blackmailing her clients before she was murdered; it Sandra's stepmother who painted the sinister painting, revealed in scene twenty-four, that helps Stefano identify the killer, and it is Sandra's letter – dropped on the floor by accident in scene fifty – that connects the threatening notes Paolo has received with Nardi's typewriter, prompting a chain of events resulting in the identification of the killer and closure of the narrative. Sandra and her developing relationship with Stefano are, it becomes clear, entirely fundamental to *Solamente*'s central narrative.

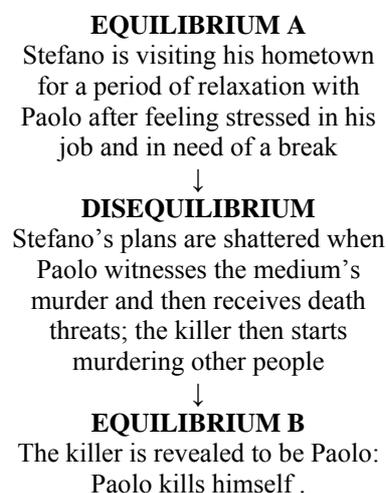
In terms of the genre theories discussed earlier, both films could be summarised by basic structuralist models of equilibrium and disequilibrium, as Figure 4.3.3 below indicates:

Figure 4.3.3 (Dis)equilibria in *Uomini si nasce poliziotti si muore* and *Solamente Nero*

Uomini si nasce poliziotti si muore



Solamente Nero



From this perspective, it is once again violence that is key to the establishing and reconciliation of the disequilibria presented: the killing of Rick and the medium's murder both upset the balance of the films' initial equilibria, and it takes the shooting of Pasquini and the suicide of Paolo to re-establish new narrative equilibria in the final scenes of each film. Building on this, it is not difficult to formulate another structuralist paradigm outlining the *symbolic* function of violence and its capacity to

resolve deeper thematic conflicts in the films. The narrative structure of *Uomini*, for example, could be broken down into a series of binary oppositions, some of which are reflected in Kitses' dissection of the frontier myth: law versus disorder; honesty versus corruption; the individual versus society; the Mafia versus the State; vigilantism versus procedure and violence versus diplomacy.⁵⁶ The same is true for *Solamente*, which could be discussed in terms of the key oppositions that its narrative sets up between "secular" knowledge and religion, memory and repression, truth and lies, law and disorder, men and women, heterosexuality and homosexuality: again, themes that have been reiterated throughout the relatively small body of work existing on the *giallo*.

From this narrative-dependent perspective, in fact, *Uomini* and *Solamente* both present fairly standard plots that could be paralleled with a number of mainstream genre films. The central distinction to be made, however – and one which is key to a better understanding of both *filoni* – is that while this approach identifies Kitses' "scaffold of meanings" and grounds the films in wider thematic (and often specifically Italian) issues, it fails to take into account the plenitude of visual and aural elements that are *superfluous* to this scaffold and, crucially, are habitually prioritised across the films themselves. Studying the *filone* from this perspective also fails to account for the emphasis that is based on excess in these films, which typically delineate their narrative structures in a way that allows them to prioritise visual and aural *show* over the altogether more banal act of storytelling.

Beginnings

This idea is immediately foregrounded as *Uomini* and *Solamente* begin, for both opening sequences take the form of music-accompanied numbers presenting an array of excessive elements. From its outset *Uomini* emphasises the act of display, beginning with a title sequence that shows Fred and Tony riding leisurely on a motorbike around Rome's crowded streets. There is no establishing shot – the sequence begins *in medias res*, and offers a series of medium shots that seemingly

⁵⁶ Indeed, this is precisely how Barry (2004) frames his examination of the *poliziotteschi*.

come from the detectives' point-of-view: people walking past, Christmas decorations hanging from rooftops, shops and busy streets. Although these cuts place Fred and Tony within a loose point-of-view system, there is a notable spatial disconnection between most of the shots: eyeline matches are broken, un-cued "point-of-view" shots are intercut with each other; the bike travels left to right in one shot then from right to left in the next and static close-ups of the detectives are intercut with unstable hand-held long shots. There is, as a result, very little sense of trajectory or progress in the sequence: the central pleasure offered here is not one of narrative exposition but the enjoyment of cosmopolitan Italy as spectacle, spatially fragmented for display by discontinuous edits.

The *poliziotteschi* almost exclusively begin in a similar manner: *Roma a mano armata / Rome, Armed to the Teeth* (Italy, Umberto Lenzi, 1976) opens with mobile tracking shots of the city, taken this time from the window of a detective's car, as do the titles of *La belva col mitra / Beast with a Gun* (Italy, Sergio Grieco, 1977) and *Il cinico l'infame il violento / The Cynic, the Rat and the Fist* (Italy, Umberto Lenzi, 1977). Such beginnings are not limited to this cycle alone, however, and a number of *filoni* begin with spectacular "tours" like this: shark attack *filone* *L'ultimo squalo / The Last Shark* (Italy, Enzo Girolami, 1981), for example, begins with a musical title sequence depicting a windsurfer sailing and pulling off a number of stunts, many of which are rendered as attractions via the use of discontinuity editing and slow-motion to reveal excess in the image. *Giallo Malastrana / Short Night of the Glass Dolls* (Italy / West Germany / Yugoslavia, Aldo Lado, 1971) begins with a series of uncued point-of-view shots from an ambulance; their to-be-looked-at-ness emphasised by the use of sinister music and amplified, non-diegetic heavy breathing sounds which span across the cuts between shots. Finally, science-fiction horror *Contamination* (Italy, Luigi Cozzi, 1980) begins with an aerial helicopter "tour" of Manhattan, where very little of the action presented actually takes place.

Scenes like this illustrate the *filoni's* wider preoccupation with images of travel, tourism and consumerism, itself seemingly a by-product of European society in the 1960s and 1970s: as I shall illustrate, travel is also an important aspect of *Solamente*. The increasing affordability of international air travel and rise of the middle class in Italy at the time is reflected in a number of *filoni* which present "contemporary"

spectacles of airports, cities (particularly New York and Rome), deserts and jungles, playing to the desires of an audience keen to overinvest in images of both the exotic and the consumerist.⁵⁷ Moreover, this idea of “exoticism” is fundamental to Gunning’s concept of attractions, as he notes in the extract below:

The cinema was...an invention which put the world within your grasp. [...] Early cinema categorised the visible world as a series of discrete attractions, and the catalogues of the first production companies present a near encyclopaedic survey of this new hypervisible topology.

(1989, p.829)

Of equal importance in specifying *Uomini*’s opening as a discrete number is its soundtrack: an upbeat, acoustic guitar-led tune (*Maggie*, written and sung by Lovelock) that recalls the 1960s British mod tunes of the Kinks and Small Faces. With Lovelock singing in (phonetic and often nearly incomprehensible) English⁵⁸, the song’s lyrics read as follows:

When Maggie was born / Twelve years ago
Violence wasn’t so wild / Around the world
Now try to stop yourself / Just before the jewellers’ shop
You don’t know if the night / Will slip at all

I heard a girl singing with a sigh / “I’ve got a cat”
“And I think that I’ll go crazy” / “If it will be hurt”
She was trembling on the terrace / With fear for the floor
‘Cos two men were in the square / Just drinking blood

Ladies when you walk / Your lives are all in danger
You’d better give your all inside
‘Cos ladies if you yell / Your lives are all in danger
So you’d better give your all inside

On one hand, these lyrics and the tune they accompany work to distinctly narrative ends, establishing a playful, “laddish” tone that is reflected throughout by Fred and

⁵⁷ A central example of this obsession with the trappings of consumerism can be found in the 1970s *giallo* and *poliziotteschi*’s near-ubiquitous use of J&B whisky bottles within their mise-en-scène. As Koven notes in his interesting discussion of J&B in the *giallo*, the brand “would have signified sophistication, wealth, luxury and masculinity to an Italian cultural audience” as a result of its association with the “Rat Pack” in the late 1950s and subsequent popularity outside America (2006, p.49).

⁵⁸ In recent interview feature *Poliziotti Violenti / Violent Cops* (Italy, Manlio Gomasascha, 2004) Lovelock points out that he had already written two ballads before he was asked to star in the film: Ruggero Deodato, the film’s director, suggested that they had the potential to lighten the mood of the film somewhat and to also, as Lovelock wryly observes, give their writer the chance to “practice his English speaking”.

Tony's behaviour. They also to some extent prepare the viewer for the events to follow: references to "violence" and "blood" offer ample introduction to a film with beatings, shootings and robberies as its central motifs, and the setting up of gendered divisions – men as predatory vampires: women as passive, weak and at risk – is a precursor to the film's misogynistic portrayal of gender relations. In addition, the music has the preservative function of "gelling" together the often discontinuous images and prevents the sequence from being incomprehensible. At the same time, however, the excessive aspects of the song and the images that it accompanies creates the idea that whatever the song is *telling* the viewer about the narrative is rendered far less important than the immediacy of what it is *showing* him or her. Links can be made between the lyrics and *Uomini*'s narrative, but they are markedly tenuous,⁵⁹ their references to a "cat" and a "jeweller's shop" referring to two decidedly minimal aspects of the plot.⁶⁰ Furthermore, there is no character called "Maggie" in either the English or Italian-language versions of the film, much less a twelve year-old girl who could take the mantle of the girl in the song. Nevertheless, the fact that the song is pleasing to the ear and thus reflects what my last chapter shall call "to-be-listened-to-ness" via its excessive interpretation of then-popular British mod music seems to adequately justify its inclusion in the scene.

In contrast to this, *Solamente*'s opening number primarily creates its excess not through providing an exotic visual "tour" but by creating an attraction from a violent act through manipulation and foregrounding of the apparatus. The film begins with Andreani's murder, and therefore largely conforms to the typical whodunit narrative, foregrounding the central enigma to be solved by the characters of the diegesis (and, through the interplay of what Barthes label "hermeneutic" and "proairetic" codes, the viewer). Rather than establish this murder in a spatially (and by extension narratively) coherent manner, though, the sequence is mediated through fragmented (mainly

⁵⁹ It is worth noting at this stage that the use of soundtracks which riffed on title themes of popular Hollywood and British films was widespread through the *filoni*. Budgetary constraints typically entailed that there was not enough money to hire an "authentic" American or British pop singer like Tom Jones, Frank Sinatra or Lulu to sing the title theme and many of the films consequently employed Italian singers to sing phonetic versions of pop songs in translated English. A good example of these lyrics can be found in the work of composers Guido and Maurizio de Angelis, whose themes for *filoni* like *poliziotteschi Il cittadino si ribella / Street Law* (Italy, Enzo Girolami, 1974) and western *Mannaja / A Man Called Blade* (Italy, Sergio Martino, 1977) employ similar phonetic lyrics.

⁶⁰ In scene four Norma tells Fred and Tony about a plan to rob a jewellery shop – this is the first and last time that this is mentioned – and in scene twenty-three Tony plays briefly with Morandi's cat.

facial) close-ups, the excessive potential of which is further increased by the combination of these shots with unstable camera movement and a literal slowing-down of the apparatus itself via slow-motion and the jerky, strobe-like visual effect used. Remarkably, the only time when the camera cuts to a long shot is in the final shot of the sequence when Andreani's body falls to the ground and the killer escapes: the framing and spatial composition of this shot (a deep image showing her centrally-framed body in the near foreground; the forest behind her; the monastery on a hill behind and the bright blue sky) create an overtly spectacular, "painterly" *mise-en-scène*. This effect is also mirrored by the accompanying soundtrack, which begins with a slow and foreboding minor-key piano / synth motif before entering the realms of excess, chiefly through the loud and sonically-manipulated synth timpani sounds which punctuate the sequence and are seemingly unconnected to either the images on screen or the rhythmic structure of the tune underneath them. That this image is then even further rendered as an attraction by the freeze-frame that follows (itself representing the literal *pausing* of the apparatus) only further underlines the emphasis placed by the sequence on its excessive elements.

To problematise these arguments, it should be stressed that *Solamente*'s opening sequence is not *entirely* incoherent: its fragmentation of space through close-up in fact works towards the distinct narrative purpose of restricting the view of the killer, in the process establishing essential mystery and suspense. In addition, by focusing in close-up on the prayer book and the images that Andreani has torn from it the film poses hermeneutic narrative questions (why is the book important? what is the significance of the torn pages?) that are not answered until the film explicitly flashes back to this sequence⁶¹ in scene fifty-six to answer them. Finally, the painterly nature of the freeze-frame is actually essential to later developments in the narrative, for its composition is analogised by the sinister painting that Stefano first sees in scene twenty-four and is essential to the plot. Centrally, the reiteration of this opening shot illustrates one of the distinctive "games" of spectatorship alluded to in Chapter Two: in a number of the *filoni* (most commonly the *giallo* by virtue of its emphasis on mystery and investigation) the viewer is presented with seemingly indecipherable

⁶¹ Notably, the film's final flashback is shown *devoid* of the strobe effects that accompany it in the opening sequence and during Stefano's "attacks": excess is therefore minimised in the final scene to allow the narrative significance of the events to be coherently conveyed.

images that turn out to be instrumental in revealing the identity of the killer. On watching this scene in retrospect, the emphasis on the prayer book, the monastery and the dark robed arms of the killer quite obviously identify Paolo as the killer, but it is only when the film flashes back at the end to *reiterate* this shot that the viewer is made aware of the fact that he or she has already seen all of the clues that are needed to solve *Solamente*'s central mystery.

Such events, where both viewer and protagonist struggle to make sense of a “primal scene” from their experience that is somehow connected to the identity of the murderer (and explicitly reiterated at the end of the film) are particularly common in the films of Dario Argento. Sam Dalmas, the protagonist from *L'uccello dale piume di cristallo / The Bird with the Crystal Plumage* (Italy / West Germany, 1970) is an accidental witness to an attempted murder in an opening scene, and he fails to correctly interpret until the end of the film when it is revealed that the “victim” was in fact the killer. A particularly relevant comparison with *Solamente* can also be found in *Profondo Rosso / Deep Red* (Italy, 1975) whose protagonist Marcus Daly is troubled by the memory of a painting that he walked past during one of the film's numbers: the enigma is solved when Daly realises that the “painting” was in fact a mirror showing the face of the killer hiding in the shadows. In all of these cases, the resolution of narrative conflicts is matched by the spectatorial “tricks” being played on the viewer: it is precisely the elements which initially appear to be excessive (the painterly composition; the slow-motion close-ups of the prayer book; the painting and attempted murder that have “something strange” about them) that are later proven to be essential to narrative development.

As elaborate as these tricks often are in the *giallo*, the key point here is that the narrative pleasures elicited by *Solamente*'s opening scene (the posing of enigmas; drama and suspense; horror) are – like those of *Uomini*'s motorbike ride – overwhelmed by more immediate pleasures that are primarily visual and sonic in nature and arise from watching the violent act unfold, seeing the film literally slow down to specularise the violence, hearing manipulated effects disrupt the soundtrack and – to paraphrase Thompson – watching (and listening to) motivation ending and excess beginning. As Sconce and Hawkins note of paracinema, it is at moments like these where the “stylish eccentricity” and “formal bizarreness” – rather than the

narratives – of the films become the primary focus of textual attention. Such pleasures are by no means confined to the films' opening scenes, however: as I shall now illustrate, excess frequently rises to the surface of the *filone* at later points where – as Bordwell, Thompson and Staiger note of mainstream cinema – a film's "concentrated and preliminary" narration (and by extension the potential for creating cinematic excess that its self-consciousness reveals) "should" have faded back to immerse the viewer in the narrative (1985, p.27).

Delays and Spectacular Digressions

The very nature of *Uomini*'s opening sequence – over which the film's credits are displayed – perhaps goes some way to explaining its discontinuities and visual excesses, for it is hard to become absorbed in the diegesis of a film when the shots presented are overlaid by titles.⁶² Significantly, however, after the film's titles have been displayed *Uomini* begins "proper", with a spectacular and violent number depicting the attempted theft of a woman's handbag. This scene presents a fairly coherent and logical metanarrative: the woman walks out of the bank, the motorcycle thieves grab her handbag, she refuses to let go of it and is therefore dragged along the ground. The thieves then drag her into a lamppost and one of them jumps off the motorcycle: he kicks her repeatedly in the body and head in order to prise the bag from her grasp but she refuses to let go. As this is happening, Fred and Tony arrive on their bike, prompting the thieves to give up and set off without the bag: the detectives check the woman's body and set off in pursuit, with Tony stealing another motorcycle from the back of a passing van.

To describe the sequence in such narrative terms, however, is to miss the far greater emphasis that *Uomini*'s scene places on the excesses for which these narrative developments seem to act as a mere springboard. Each of the decisive narrative actions in this sequence of shots is accompanied (and typically overshadowed) by a

⁶² Opening and end credits are in fact one of the best examples of regulated excess in the mainstream film: by their very nature they refer to specifically *non-diegetic* aspects of the film (the personnel who worked on it) and threaten the stability of the diegesis. Like the similarly excessive numbers of the musical, however, this excess is formally bracketed by a number of standardised devices such as the fading in and out of music; the absence of diegetic sound; even the introduction of studio logos.

distinct attraction, a process which offers an insight into how narrative and excess are not mutually exclusive and often compete at the same time in the *filoni*. The motorcycle thieves grab the handbag and drag the woman behind the bike: the woman is shown in upside-down facial close-up (a shot that cannot logically be related to any diegetic point-of-view) and from an extremely high-angle as she is dragged along the pavement. The thieves try to wrest the bag from her grip: the camera shows one of them, this time from an extremely low angle, thrusting his arm towards the screen. Again, this shot cannot be logically related to the woman's point-of-view, as it is not upside down. The woman's head hits the lamppost: in close-up the camera shows her head hitting the post, but instantly cuts to a crash zoom in to an extreme close-up of an onlooker's horrified expression (accompanied by a loud "thud"), another example of the use of the *filone's* look *away* from violence to create an attraction. One of the thieves gets off the bike and starts kicking the woman: the camera cuts between low angle shots of the thief kicking and a high-angle close-up of the woman's bloodied face explicitly being kicked. Finally, Fred and Tony arrive, but the narrative importance of their arrival is somewhat undercut by the use of a fast crash zoom towards them which again creates an attraction by foregrounding the manipulation of the camera lens.

The moments examined in this scene provide an *in miniature* overview of the relationship between excess and narrative that is habitually set up in the *filone's* numbers, recalling Barthes' suggestion that excess meaning establishes another script whose effect is fundamentally "counternarrational" and works against narrative cohesion within the text. However, it is in the motorcycle chase that follows these events that this other script becomes prioritised to a far greater extent, and the many chase scenes that recur in these films are indicative of the *filone's* wider practice of using numbers to present narrative *delays* in order to create excessive spectacles. It is true that similar chases in the mainstream film also serve a distinctly spectacular function: the famous sequences from *Bullitt* (USA, Peter Yates, 1969) and *The French Connection* (USA, William Friedkin, 1971), for example, may advance narrative but are memorable primarily for their "stylishness" and immediate feelings of kineticism and excitement that they attempt to evoke in the viewer. As spectacular as these scenes may be, though, they still rely on narrative logic, trajectory and causality to underpin these spectacles and create suspense. Such elements are far more tenuous in

Uomini's six minute-long chase sequence, though. In narrative terms, it is clear that Fred and Tony will either catch or lose the two thieves, but any narrative suspense directing expectations to the final outcome of the sequence is overshadowed by its numerous delays and interruptions to the scene's metanarrative. Any "suspense" that this scene offers is recurrently undermined by its discernible weakening of narrative trajectory, for there is very little sense of Fred and Tony getting any closer or further away from the thieves that they are pursuing. At points in the sequence Fred and / or Tony are just behind them, but in the next shot appear to be far away from them: at one point they both have the thieves physically boxed in, yet inexplicably allow them to escape and extend the number even further.

Excess is also created across the sequence by a number of seemingly superfluous narrative events which allow for *Uomini* to dwell even further on its spectacular digressions. Fred drives through a crowded *piazza*, deliberately knocking over tables and scattering customers; Tony decides to do a wheelie (an example of purely ostentatious show) and then drives over the roofs of two cars; the thieves run over a blind man's guide dog, whose bloodied corpse is rendered as an attraction by central framing and a crash zoom that seems to appear from nowhere. The lack of narrative urgency of these events is even further accentuated by the unprompted introduction halfway through the chase of a brass-led jazz waltz theme on the soundtrack. With its funk guitars, upbeat tone, soloing and relaxed tempo, the laid-back, improvisational and unstructured feel of the track is matched perfectly by the sequence's leisurely decision to delay its narrative events in favour of foregrounding excessive elements. As in the film's opening scene, such events are not completely removed from the narrative: Fred and Tony's actions convey character information about their willingness to take risks and to show off, not to mention their "basic criminal traits" (destroying property, stealing motorcycles) referred to by the Captain in scene seventeen. The evil nature of the thieves is also accentuated by their intentional killing of the guide dog, an action which makes their eventual murder at the hands of Fred and Tony far more acceptable within the moral universe (insofar as it exists at all) of the diegesis. However, the integration of such events with character and morality is of secondary importance in this sequence to the to-be-looked-at-ness of the attractions presented which – like the female bodies of Mulvey's argument – temporarily halt narrative progression.

Such digressional numbers can be traced throughout *Uomini* and frequently gloss over narrative information and events that could lead to their deeper integration within the film. Although the initial bike ride around Rome and ensuing chase sequence provide a degree of information about the characters, the level of violence in society and the extreme measures that Fred and Tony are prepared to take to combat it, it is remarkable that neither of them have a real bearing on *Uomini*'s central plot goal of catching Pasquini: it is not until scene six, in fact, that this goal is even alluded to. In scene eight, Fred and Tony try to "hit" Pasquini by disrupting one of his gambling dens: while this narrative scene represents their first decisive move against him, the sequence focuses almost exclusively on the spectacle created by the burning cars (and camera violence attractions of the camera being "burned") and in fact never shows the inside of the gambling den or the gamblers in the first place. The viewer is never made aware of exactly *why* Fred and Tony decide to destroy the cars, or why burning the cars of Pasquini's customers – rather than his organisation itself – is a valid action to take: that the spectacle of burning cars and attraction created by a "burning" camera are enjoyable to look at fully justifies their inclusion within this scene, however. As a final example, scene eleven portrays a siege that is absolutely unrelated to the Pasquini case and represents an complete digression from the film's plot:⁶³ this number is in fact longer than any other of *Uomini*'s scenes and is almost entirely superfluous to the rest of the film.

Spectacular digressions are also discernible within *Solamente*, despite the introduction of narrative trajectory, characters and plot points in the scenes immediately following its opening sequence. Scenes one to sixteen (the first twenty-five minutes) firmly set the plot in motion by adopting the "concentrated, preliminary" narration that Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson cite as essential to the mainstream film (1985, p.28), providing a wealth of plot-related information. The original Andreani murder is shown; all of the main characters are introduced; the key plot-initiating events of Paolo witnessing the medium's murder and ensuing death threats are presented; the convention of the "killer point-of-view" shots is established and, finally, the psychological "attacks" that Stefano is experiencing are for the first time portrayed.

⁶³ A slight link is made between the siege and the special squad in scene fourteen, when the Captain congratulates Fred and Tony for "catching" Ruggerini, the leader of the siege. Taking into account the brevity of this mention and the fact that Ruggerini is mentioned neither before nor after it, the narrative "justification" for including a ten-and-a-half minute-long number is decidedly tenuous in this instance.

Once this initial exposition has been achieved, however, the narrative flow of *Solamente* is interrupted by scene seventeen, which shows Stefano walking through the streets of Venice and being observed by some of the locals. There are in fact a number of travel scenes (by train, ferry, speedboat and by foot) in the film, but most notable about this scene is the fact that it presents another of the *filoni*'s many narrative delays and stases.

Again, such scenes are far from being uncommon in the mainstream film, which often veers away from its central plot for scenes of comedy, romance or other “light relief”. Significantly, however, *Solamente*'s scene is seemingly unmotivated and instead focuses – like *Uomini*'s bike ride through Rome – on creating spectacles from a narratively insignificant and fairly commonplace diegetic activity. The viewer is given no indication of where Stefano is walking to; why he is walking, or why this seemingly insignificant minute-and-a-half-long walk is being shown in real-time. Although coherent spatial relations are established between Stefano and the fisherman and boy that he walks past, and the low angle shots of Venetians looking out of their windows are cued from Stefano's point-of-view, a number of stylised camera movements draw attention to themselves and create excesses which become the focal point of the sequence. As Stefano walks past a terrace of houses, the camera tracks left, pans left then tilts up to reveal an old woman watching him from her window; an extreme high-angle shot tilts down pans right and tracks back to follow Stefano's progress under the camera; another high-angle shot, almost completely obscured by the silhouettes of two buildings, shows Stefano walking across the small centrally-framed gap between them. This short sequence places a far greater investment in the spectacle provided by excessive camera movement and angle than it does any narrative significance of Stefano's seemingly aimless walk.

The element of this sequence which most concretises its status as a “number”, however, is the soundtrack that accompanies the images described. When the sequence begins, the soundtrack is fully in support of narrative cohesion and uses diegetic ambient sound – the chug of a passing barge's motor; the sound of a church bell; Stefano's footsteps – to help establish space. As Stefano walks past the fisherman and the boy, the fisherman lightly spansks the boy and tells him to “go to your grandma”: both his speech and the spank can be heard quite prominently on the

soundtrack. However, as Stefano walks away from the fisherman the ambient sounds are slowly drowned out by a tune of increasing volume whose meandering synth lines (laid over a jerky bass riff and unconventional hi-hat-driven time signature) accurately reflect the unmotivated and excessive camera movements and angles that follow. The sequence ends with a “shock” when Stefano is hit by a falling piece of bed linen: the musical accompaniment quite markedly comments on this by using a loud synth “hiss” to reflect the impact before stopping abruptly to signal the end of the number. When Stefano is shown continuing his journey in the following scene (eighteen), the narrational ambiguity created by the tune has disappeared, replaced by more coherent ambient sounds: having briefly focused on this digression, *Solamente* can return to telling its story, and it comes as no surprise when Stefano happens by chance to “bump into” Sandra shortly after.

Another key digression in the film comes in scene thirty-six, when Stefano and Sandra decide to go on a speedboat ride around the waterways of the archipelago. This sequence is far more entrenched in the narrative than the scene just described, for it represents a key “bonding scene” between the two romantic leads, who first kiss and consummate their relationship in the scene that follows. Nevertheless, after an initial period where ambient sound and the character’s laughter and dialogue convey this scene’s narrative information (Stefano is driving the speedboat quickly to scare Sandra; they are laughing together and growing more fond of each other) these sounds completely fade out and are replaced by a jazzy 1970s “Euro-disco” theme. At this stage – after the essential narrative information has been dispensed with – a number of excessive shots emerge: a high-angle mobile close-up of the water flying past the camera; long shots emphasising the Venetian skyline and, bizarrely, recurring facial close-ups of Sandra and Stefano which show them speaking to each other even though there is no diegetic sound accompanying them. Narrative motivation in scenes like this begins at the forefront of the sequence only to be threatened and ultimately delayed – as in *Uomini*’s opening sequence – by the build-up of excess, revelation of narrative fictiveness and consequent presentation of attractions.

Character, Agency and Causality

What, then, is the effect of these delays and frequent prioritisations of excess in the *filone*? A productive perspective from which to answer this question is provided by Gunning, who focuses on the “non-narrative” pleasures that the attraction offers:

Attractions could be opposed to narrative construction in a number of ways. First, attractions address the viewer directly, soliciting attention and curiosity through acts of display. As moments of spectacle, their purpose lies in the attention they draw to themselves, rather than developing the basic *données* of narrative: characterisation (motives and psychology); causality (or the casual concatenation of actions, which Roland Barthes calls the *proairetic*); narrative suspense (spectator involvement with the outcome of events, which Barthes calls the chain of enigmas); or the creation of a consistent fictional world (the *diegesis* of classical film semiotics).
(1994, p.189)

I have already discussed the effect of excess on suspense and diegetic coherence within the sequences described, but of equal interest are its effects on the larger elements of characterisation and causality that are essential to film narration. As a rule, characters in the *filone* are typified by a weakening of motive, psychology, history and agency: elements that are all essential to what is commonly understood as character “roundedness”. One initial way that this is figured is through the common practice – alluded to in Chapter One – of re-titling films and main characters to exploit emergent trends in the market. The protagonist of *La vendetta di Ercole / Goliath and the Dragon* (Italy / France, Vittorio Cottafavi, 1960), for example, is named “Hercules” in the Italian print of the film (titled *The Revenge of Hercules*), yet in English-language export prints is called “Goliath”, the emphasis on his labours being completely abandoned in favour of a title that to a far greater extent emphasises the spectacle that a film with a dragon in it can offer. On watching *La vendetta* itself this becomes even vaguer, for the English-language print names the protagonist as “Emilius the Mighty – The ‘Goliath’ of Thebes”. Moreover, there is no real “revenge” to be sought against the eponymous dragon: Emilius / Goliath / Hercules begins the film on a mission to find an exotic diamond, notices the dragon but decides to concentrate on the task in hand, in fact *avoiding* any confrontation with it. It is only in the film’s climactic scene, where villain Eurito tries to sacrifice Emilius’ wife to the

dragon, that he confronts and eventually kills the beast, and there is little to suggest that any revenge is being sought. This tenuousness is also widespread in the western *filone*, where character names were either frequently changed to “Django”, “Ringo”, “Trinity” and “Sartana” as marketing tools or were even removed to create anonymous “men with no name” in the vein of Clint Eastwood’s character in *Per un pugno di dollari / A Fistful of Dollars* (Italy / Spain, Sergio Leone, 1964).

Although their actual names do not differ across different prints of *Uomini*,⁶⁴ Fred and Tony are equally lacking in definition and roundedness. There lies an irony in the fact that the detectives are in almost every scene and spend an inordinate amount of time in facial close-up, yet by the end of the film the viewer is no “closer” to their motives and psychology. The only back story that *Uomini* provides is in scene six, when the Captain briefly describes why the squad was formed and alludes to Fred and Tony’s non-procedural behaviour; scene seventeen, where he describes how their “basic traits” were revealed to be “criminal” and, tenuously, in scene ten where a corner of Tony’s room has boxing gloves and photos of him wearing a judo suit. The film – and the *filoni* in general – are far more concerned with what their characters *do* and have *done* (and the potential for spectacle that actions offer) than their psychology and motivation. In contrast, however, one of *Solamente*’s most distinctive features is the fact that it somehow succeeds in creating spectacle from character psychology: Stefano’s stylised “attacks” throughout the film and Paolo’s “vision” in scene fifty-six⁶⁵ present attractions that are almost “mini-numbers” within the sequences around them. Furthermore, Stefano is a far more rounded character than either Fred or Tony, again by virtue of the nature of the *giallo*’s comparatively strong emphasis on narrative. Like most of the “protagonists” of the cycle, he “does” very little to influence the narrative in terms of physical or violent acts (arresting or killing the killer; protecting the victims) and it is in the dramatisation of his internal thought processes and the trajectory towards his eventual solving of the mystery that the central thrust of the film lies: this is why so many *gialli* end with flashbacks to “piece

⁶⁴ In the original Italian print of the film, Fred is “Alfredo” while Tony is “Antonio”.

⁶⁵ This is a point of almost complete incoherence in the film where, without any distinctive bracketing mechanisms, Stefano appears to be experiencing a vision of himself standing in the church and giving communion to the five victims. The film cuts rapidly between low angle close-ups of religious iconography on the church walls, close-ups of the victims’ faces and close-ups of Stefano’s face: Stefano then “confronts” his vision, flees the room and jumps off the top of the church tower to his death.

together” the protagonist’s thought processes for the viewer. Almost every piece of narrative information that *Solamente* conveys about Stefano is therefore tied to the film’s central plot: his feeling “washed out”; his psychological attacks; his repressed memories and his reaction to the painting. There is no “excess” of character information, and the film, like *Uomini*, only presents the bare minimum of information necessary to allow its narrative to develop.

This is also true of the secondary characters in each narrative. Although Rick’s death in *Uomini* is presumed to be the reason for the detectives’ subsequent revenge attacks on Pasquini, there is no sense that this event carries any real structural importance whatsoever. Rick is introduced, speaks a few lines and is killed within the space of ten minutes: he is coded throughout by the film’s mise-en-scène as an insignificant, arbitrary character. His officious costume – grey jacket, pressed trousers and open-necked blue shirt – contrasts strongly with the far “cooler” denims, cravats and leather and tan jackets worn by Fred and Tony. The divisions here are clear: Rick belongs within the pastel and grey environment of the police office, while Fred and Tony belong in the street. Rick drives an old Mini; Fred and Tony ride Suzuki motorbikes – one of his first lines to the detectives is, tellingly, “All day I’ve been trying to catch up with you two”. His character is also further robbed of significance by the film’s framing: throughout the sequence he is shot on the periphery of the frame and never occupies the central position enjoyed by the detectives and commissioner, who rarely even look at him.

When Rick leaves the building, however, he performs his most important function for the film: centrally-framed in medium shot, he walks to his car and one of Pasquini’s men shoots him in the chest with a shotgun. As blood flies out of his chest in close-up (again centrally-framed) and the camera cuts to medium shot to watch him fall in slow-motion onto the bonnet of his car, one thing is evident: it is only when Rick is *violated* and provides a distinct spectacle that the film invests him with any visual importance whatsoever. The detectives chase off Rick’s assassins before running over to his body: Fred briefly cradles Rick’s head in his hands – accompanied by an upbeat flute segue – the sequence finishes, and within a minute the detectives are laughing, joking and punching people to a rousing funk score in the following scene. Secondary

characters like this are often more important for the spectacles that their violation can provide than for any narrative agency they may possess.

Solamente again presents an interesting comparison that problematises this and illustrates the *giallo*'s emphasis on character psychology that stands out from the other cycles examined. Characters in the Italian western, peplum, horror film or *poliziotteschi* rarely express their innermost feelings and motivations – and if they do, it is only because this information is absolutely essential to the plot: there are none of the “loose ends” associated with conventions of psychological realism in cinema. Yet while the majority of Stefano's admissions are essential to narrative advancement, the psychology of his brother remains unclear and unsubstantiated: the lingering question left hanging at the end of *Solamente* – one which is essential to the resolution of the whodunit – is one of *motive*. Although the film's *dénouement* makes it clear why Paolo murdered the three people who attended the séances (he was never sure which of Aloisi, Pedrazzi and Nardi knew about his original murder) and leaves the viewer to assume that he murdered Sandra's step-mother due to her painting, the far bigger question of why he murdered Andreani in the first place is never answered – let alone addressed. Stefano reveals in scene twenty-seven that Paolo dropped out of Padova University after arguing with his lecturers and classmates, that he joined the seminary to “please his mother” and that “after he was ordained he was very nervous but I find... he's calmer now”, but this is the only time when Paolo's past and motives are discussed in the film. Rather than depict Paolo confessing exactly why he committed the original murder, scene fifty-six instead shows him admitting his guilt (a vital narrative aspect) but then almost instantly foregrounds excess through the disorientating vision that he then experiences. Even at this late and decisive stage of the narrative, *Solamente* is more concerned with using it as a pretext for presenting spectacle and creating attractions.

Other secondary characters in both films rarely extend beyond typeage and are given little three-dimensionality. Little is known about the psychology or history of *Uomini*'s Captain, for example: he insists on following “police procedure” and gives frequent dressing-downs to the detectives for breaking the rules, but in doing this is merely confirming the stereotype of the angry, rules-obsessed boss that is widespread throughout the *poliziotteschi*. Norma represents a “liberated feminist” type, to be

contrasted with Lina, the archetypal sex-obsessed “loose woman”. Pasquini is a remorseless villain whose motives and history remain unimportant: even his Swedish girlfriend is caricatured by her thick Nordic accent (on the English-language print) and insistence on sunbathing topless in winter (“vinter, ja, but sun is hot” she says, prompting Pasquini’s henchman to say “these Swedes are bubbleheads”). *Solamente*, too, relies on such stereotypes and none of the other characters are “fleshed out” by the film: Sandra, her stepmother, the painting and the envelope with distinctive typewritten “T” are crucial to the plot, but Sandra never disagrees with or questions Stefano’s actions, and in later scenes merely tags along without showing any real depth of character. Pedrazzi is the archetypal “old queen”, a homosexual who keeps a young effete lover (Thomas, another stereotype) and sexually abuses children; Signor Andreani is an old drunk with a rotten liver, presumably sparked off in the past by his daughter’s murder; Aloisi is a dishonest doctor with a gambling addiction who freely prescribes pills, and Nardi – the only other murderer in the film – is a backstreet abortionist with a stereotypically “insane” son.

The distinct weakness of character in *filoni* like *Uomini* and *Solamente* is also mirrored by weakening of *causality* and *agency* across the films. In the former’s opening handbag robbery scene, for example, Fred and Tony do not arrive in time to save the woman from being beaten up by the thieves, and as the chase progresses it becomes clear that they are unable to decisively catch the thieves’ motorbike. Tellingly, when the chase *does* end it is almost through accident that the thieves are incapacitated: the detectives force the thieves’ bike off-course and into the back of a stationary van, one of them dies when he is impaled on the van’s handbrake and the other goes through the van’s front window and is knocked unconscious. Fred and Tony spark off these events by forcing the thieves to crash their bike (and end them when Fred snaps the neck of the unconscious man) but the markedly tenuous link between their incapacitation and the actions of Fred and Tony seems undermine the notion of the detectives as decisive protagonists controlling the course of the film. This becomes more and more apparent as *Uomini*’s narrative progresses: when Rick is killed in scene seven Fred and Tony try to shoot his assassin, but it is only when the latter falls under a car that his fate is sealed. In scene sixteen the detectives interrogate Pasquini’s sister and are unable to find any leads: they both have sex with her, she reveals nothing and the entire episode becomes another digression, inconsequential in

terms of the central plot of the film.⁶⁶ In scene eighteen, Fred and Tony hang two of Pasquini's men from the roof with handcuffs and torture them before finding out that the men have no information to impart: upon finding this out, the detectives beat them up anyway. The inclusion of such scenes where protagonists reach narrative "dead ends" is not uncommon in the mainstream film (or, for that matter, the *giallo*) but such digressions consistently weaken both agency and the idea – essential to suspense – that something of narrative significance will happen at the end of scenes like this.

Uomini's climax is perhaps most problematic to the agency of the characters and the film's cause-effect logic, for it is not an action of Fred and Tony that draws the narrative to a close but that of a minor character, the Captain, who in scene twenty-six shoots Pasquini and his henchman just in time to stop them blowing up the detectives on the boat. Until this point the Captain has appeared in only four brief office scenes and has done little else other than chastise the detectives and provide them with narrative leads. To have such a minor character – whose actions have exerted a comparatively small influence on the plot – bring the film to a close makes for a narratively "unsatisfactory" ending that calls into question the importance of Fred and Tony's actions throughout. These characters are clearly not "protagonists" in the traditional sense: throughout the film, narrative courses are set in motion independently of their actions, and attempts to forge a psychological chain of events are further frustrated by the fact that these "heroes" – as I have mentioned – lack the histories, motivations and general roundedness of character essential to narrative transitivity (they even lack surnames).⁶⁷ The mixed message that *Uomini's* narrative sends out, it appears, is that while it may be immensely enjoyable to revel in the spectacle of two "cool guys" riding bikes, breaking the rules, flirting with women and committing acts of vandalism, theft, assault and cold-blooded murder, in reality it is the procedural methods of the old, fat, comical desk-bound Chief that prove to be the most decisive in the film.

⁶⁶ Pasquini is never shown to have found out about the detectives having sex with his sister, and it is never made clear whether the detectives do this as an attack on him or merely because they like having sex.

⁶⁷ This idea is echoed by Eleftheriotis' work on the "protagonists" of the Italian western, where he argues that "the spaghetis are fundamentally about men with no name, no place and no nation" (2001, p.127).

Character agency is weakened to an even greater extent throughout *Solamente* for, unlike Fred and Tony, Stefano is almost completely powerless to control the chain of events that unfolds around him. Although the central crux of the whodunit narrative rests on him *interpreting* rather than influencing these events, like many *giallo* protagonists all Stefano can do is go from one murder scene to another until he eventually realises who the killer is. Indeed, it is striking that the three events most decisive in drawing the film's narrative to a close arise completely by accident: in scene fifty Sandra drops her suitcase, spilling out the envelope with its distinctive letter "t" on it and leading Stefano to decide that Nardi is the killer. In the following scene (fifty-one), it is only when Nardi's murdered body "accidentally" falls out of a closet on top of him that he decides her *son* is the killer, and it is only when Paolo accidentally mentions Nardi's death that Stefano eventually gets the killer's identity right. Furthermore, like Fred and Tony (and unlike the protagonist of the mainstream genre film) Stefano is also powerless to exact justice upon the film's true villain: rather than put up a fight or seek absolution for his sins, Paolo jumps off the top of the church steeple in a sequence that places far greater emphasis on the spectacular qualities of this suicidal act than its potential to draw the narrative to a satisfactory close.

This weakening of agency and motivation can be traced across the various *filone* cycles, finding its zenith in the many films where violent deaths are not interpersonal, occurring by accident or without human agents perpetrating them. In horror film *Suspiria* (Italy, Dario Argento, 1977) a dog kills one of the characters, tearing his throat out; in the *giallo* *Non si sevizia un paperino / Don't Torture a Duckling* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1978), the film's villain (also a murderous priest) falls off a cliff and scrapes his face off on the way down; in *Napoli violenta* (Italy, Umberto Lenzi, 1976) a criminal is being chased, attempts to climb over a fence, slips and punctures his own throat on the spikes. The frequency of these absurd (and increasingly inventive) numbers not only reflects the Italian directors' attempts to "outdo" each other discussed earlier but also underlines the *filone's* predilection for showing such causally tenuous acts, regardless of how narratively inconsistent or even absurd they may be.

Dual Focus and Episodic Structures

Having focused thus far on the ways in which narrative and excess relate in *Uomini* and *Solamente*, I would like to draw these findings together with the musical debates discussed in Section 4.2 in order to present my own structuralist schema for the *filone*. Throughout my analyses I have recurrently mentioned the “conflicts” between narrative and excess, discussing not only the points where excess is minimised in the service of narrative but, more specifically to the *filone*, the frequent moments where this relationship is *reversed* and narrative is delayed to allow for the foregrounding of excess. Drawing this together with the structuralist arguments developed by Altman (1978) and Williams (1989), a productive means of theorising these conflicts is through the identification of *dual focus* structures in the *filoni*. Yet on attempting to apply their schemata to the films examined an important schism emerges. While the dual focus of the porn film and musical is based on the dramatisation and eventual reconciliation (through the numbers) of gendered oppositions within the diegesis, the weakening of character, narrative agency, motivation and continuity in the *filone* renders such narrative-based antinomies untenable. Scenes of violence and spectacle in *Solamente* no more resolve oppositions between men and women, the church and society or honesty and corruption than the numerous chases, punch-ups and shootouts of *Uomini* coherently articulate the conflicts between procedure and vigilantism, corruption and honour or crime and lawfulness. Certainly, these conflicts are all present in the underlying narrative: the fact that they are typically displaced and rendered unimportant by excess in the films, however, suggests that the central conflict to be resolved by the *filone* spans *outwith* the diegesis and involves the structure of the text itself. The essential “problem” of *Uomini* and *Solamente* is not one of gender, law, or religion but the reconciliation of diegetic unity with the excess script that continually threatens it.

To illustrate this I would like bring into my investigation the musical *Singin' in the Rain* (USA, Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen, 1952), which like many other musicals has as its central focus the romantic tension between its two leads: Don Lockwood (Gene Kelly), a popular silent movie actor, and Kathy Seldon (Debbie Reynolds), a down-on-her-luck aspirant actress. During a period where the first “talkies” are emerging, Don and his on-screen *paramour* Lina Lamont (the film’s scheming and

immature antagonist, played by Jean Hagen) experience problems making the transition to speaking and singing their lines in the new films, and Lina's voice is simply too harsh to be used. Don accidentally meets Kathy whilst running away from his fans and instantly falls in love with her: together with his long-time friend Cosmo Brown (Donald O'Connor) he decides to get Kathy, who has a far more agreeable singing and speaking voice, to dub Lina's lines in the new film. The film is a major success, but an increasingly jealous Lina takes full credit for Kathy's voice and tries to use her influence with the studio to prevent Kathy from doing anything other than exclusively dubbing her lines. It is only at the end of the film that Kathy finally triumphs, when it is revealed at one of Lina's public performances – through Don and Cosmo's backstage trickery – that she is in fact miming and Kathy is the real talent. Don and Kathy embrace and perform a final romantic duet together, and the film ends with a shot of a billboard poster advertising Don and Kathy as lead actors in the next blockbuster film, also entitled *Singin' in the Rain*.

In her analysis of *Singin'*, Mellencamp illustrates how the film's mise-en-scène and editing constantly work to foreground this plot in both narrative and number scenes: the two leads are centrally framed while secondary characters like Cosmo Brown (Don's old friend, played by Donald O'Connor) and are marginalised both visually – and by extension sexually – throughout (1977, p.30). An overview of the film's twelve numbers, outlined below in Figure 4.3.4, reveals their importance in introducing, developing and eventually concluding the romance plot:

Figure 4.3.4 Song and Dance Numbers in *Singin' in the Rain*

| Number | Position in Film | Song | Relation to Central Narrative |
|--------|------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| 1. | Titles | <i>Singin' in the Rain</i> | Title sequence. |
| 2. | 5m | <i>Fit as a Fiddle</i> | Shows Don and Cosmo's humble beginnings. |
| 3. | 22m | <i>All I Do is Dream of You</i> | Introduces Kathy as equally humble dancing girl. |
| 4. | 26m | <i>Make 'em Laugh</i> | Cosmo cheers Don up after failing to find Kathy. |
| 5. | 27m | <i>Beautiful Girl</i> | Illustrates rise of "talkie", Kathy recognised by Cosmo. |
| 6. | 41m | <i>You Were Meant for Me</i> | Don and Kathy's romantic union. |
| 7. | 46m | <i>Moses Supposes</i> | Don and Cosmo go to a vocal coach |

| | | | |
|-----|-----|------------------------------|---|
| | | | to prepare for a talkie. |
| 8. | 59m | <i>Good Mornin'</i> | Don, Cosmo and Kathy realise how to reinvent <i>The Duelling Cavalier</i> . |
| 9. | 65m | <i>Singin' in the Rain</i> | Don expresses his happiness at being in love with Kathy. |
| 10. | 72m | <i>Broadway Ballet</i> | Don visualises a sequence from the new film. |
| 11. | 95m | <i>Singin' in the Rain</i> | Kathy revealed as Lina's "singing voice". |
| 12. | 97m | <i>You are my Lucky Star</i> | Don stops Kathy from running away, confirms his love for her. |

As the summary above illustrates, the twelve numbers that *Singin'* presents are marked by a high level of integration with the film's central narrative, with each number either providing information central to the plot (*Fit as a Fiddle*; *All I Do is Dream of You*; *You Were Meant for Me*) or reinforcing emotions and thoughts conveyed by the protagonists (*Make 'em Laugh*; *Good Mornin'*; the eleventh title number). There is also a sense of causality and narrative trajectory created with each subsequent number: Altman's "alternating focus" is evident between the third and fourth numbers and, later on, the ninth, tenth and eleventh numbers, both sets of which precede *Singin'*'s two romantic duets (*You Were Meant for Me* and *You Are My Lucky Star*), which also mark the two crucial points in the narrative where Don and Kathy's conflicts are resolved.

The numbers presented by *Uomini* and *Solamente* do not demonstrate the same levels of narrative integration, however, and there are three distinct types of "number" that emerge across the films examined. Firstly, there are numbers in both films which exist almost completely outside their central narratives: the motorbike ride through Rome; the speedboat ride; the armed siege; Stefano's walk through Venice, *Uomini*'s failed bank robbery of scene fifteen.⁶⁸ As my discussion has illustrated, it is during scenes like these where the films' focus is most markedly on the excessive rather than the narrative "script" created by the film. A parallel at this stage could be made with *Singin'*'s least integrated number – the famous *Broadway Ballet* sequence – which also has very little to do with the film's central narrative and represents an "idea" that Don is attempting to convey to his producer. There are a number of factors, however, which ensure that *Broadway Ballet*'s narrative integration is far greater than the *flone* numbers examined. For one, the use of clear bracketing mechanisms at the start and

⁶⁸ This sequence is once again entirely superfluous to the central "Pasquini" plot set up by the film.

end of the number help to explicitly mark it out from the rest of the narrative. Don introduces the number by saying “it goes like this...” as the screen fades in from black; Don’s “character” addresses the camera in the first shot, and thirteen minutes later the sequence marks its ending just as explicitly by cross-fading between the fictional and “real” spaces of the film while Don finishes by saying “well, that’s the idea of the number”. Furthermore, the internal metanarrative that *Broadway Ballet* presents – a rags-to-riches story of a “young hooper” who becomes increasingly successful and falls in love with a woman he meets by accident – is in fact a microcosm of the film’s central plot, and draws conscious parallels to the film’s second number – *Fit as a Fiddle* – which occurs during a montage sequence where Don and Cosmo’s own rise to prominence is charted. Finally, on a thematic level, the oppositions foregrounded in *Broadway* ballet (men and women; struggling actors and Hollywood stars; good guys and bad girls) are in synchronisation with the oppositions present in the film’s narrative as a whole. Even when *Singin’* is at its most spectacular, its visual and aural excesses are never excessive enough to threaten their integration with narrative: the second “script” may be visible, but it remains at the service of plot and story throughout.

A second more common type of *filone* number occurs when scenes begin by conveying a degree of narrative information before motivation fails, excess rises to the forefront (commonly accompanied by the introduction of music) and the scenes become numbers, with narrative focus only returning at the end to close the scene off. Having set up an introductory metanarrative (Fred and Tony are chasing two thieves; Paolo is experiencing a violent vision; the killer is in Pedrazzi’s house) the film can then delay narrative trajectory and change its focus to excess (wheelies; dogs being run over; rapid editing, stylised close-ups, loud music; a meandering un-cued point-of-view shot) before reintroducing the metanarrative (the thieves are dead; Paolo’s vision has driven him to commit suicide; the killer has stabbed Pedrazzi) and closing off the scene.

Despite my foregrounding of *Uomini* and *Solamente*’s more spectacular sequences, the fact remains that there are a number of scenes which are quite simply *not* spectacular and do not present prolonged excesses. The third – and most integrated – type of “number” is not so much a number as one or more *attractions*, deployed in

otherwise coherent narrative sequences to create short “bursts” of excess: Stefano’s attacks, for example, or the switch to central framing and slow-motion when Rick is shot in scene seven of *Uomini*. The most common way in which this is figured is through the *filone*’s use of excessive shots as *bracketing mechanisms*, marking the beginnings and endings of narrative scenes by placing excessive shots at their peripheries. More often than not, sequences in the *filone* will begin and end with shots that draw attention to themselves and create these short attractions in *lieu* of using establishing long shots, master shots or two-shots to establish and re-establish narrative space. The “joins” between scenes are therefore commonly marked by attractions that typically last for no more than a few seconds and involve foregrounding of the apparatus: zooms; crash zooms; dramatic focus pulls; camera movements; exaggerated angles and, most commonly, close-ups. Twenty-one of *Solamente*’s fifty-eight scenes begin in close-up alone, and a number of the other scenes begin and / or end with these devices. As characters begin to speak and dialogue takes over, the excess created by such shots quickly fades back to let more conventional eyeline matches and shot-reverse-shot sequences take precedence, and it is only when the scene ends or a narrative element offering the potential for spectacle is introduced that these devices return. Even within these dialogue scenes, the focus on excess can re-emerge, however briefly, and foreground the fundamentally dualistic nature of the *filone*.

This is not the only way in which the joins between the *filone*’s episodes are made clear: a less-common method is the tendency of its scenes to begin or end abruptly or *in medias res*. The very fact that so many of the scenes begin or end in close-up – typically a ratio that is rarely used at the peripheries of scenes in the mainstream film – creates a sense that events have already begun or will continue, but there are numerous examples when the actions presented span outwith the confines of the sequences. A representative example of this occurs in *Uomini* across the join between scenes eleven (the siege) and twelve (Pasquini’s henchman beating up the informer): as the body of the last hostage-taker hits the ground there is a quick cut to a similarly-framed close-up of the informer on the ground being kicked. This also happens at the end of scene thirty-eight in *Solamente* when Sandra’s stepmother is being burned alive in the fireplace: from an excessive close-up camera violence shot where flames are “burning the camera” (accompanied by a loud and sinister prog-rock synth track),

the film cuts to a shot of her head burning in the fire, before ending abruptly on a short close-up of her hand. As the music quickly rings out, the rapid way in which Sandra's stepmother's death ends and the sound cliff that is created by the next scene (which begins with total silence and a long camera pan) briefly foregrounds excess and makes the join between the two scenes quite visible.

The emphasis placed on the joins between scenes also highlights the highly *episodic* structure of the films examined. *Solamente* is an extreme example of this, for it presents no less than fifty-seven scenes – around half of which are under a minute in duration – and its average scene length is one minute and fifty-five seconds. *Uomini*, by contrast, contains twenty-six scenes and has an average scene length of three minutes and four seconds, a statistic reflected in the film's reliance on the first two more lengthy types of number identified. As part of my initial research I picked ten films at random from my core corpus of study, compared the “taxonomies of attractions” I had created for them and established that their numbers, on average, took place every five-and-a-half minutes. By adopting a highly fragmented structure like this, the central question that the *filone* poses the viewer, is not the narrative-dependent “what is going to happen next?” but the far more immediate “when is the film going to change focus to its excess script next?”.

The effect of these varying degrees of (dis)integration in the *filone*'s numbers is a distinct weakening of suspense and narrative trajectory, not only within the scenes themselves but across the film as a whole. The numbers in *Uomini* that are directly linked to its central plot occur in scene seven (Pasquini's men kill Rick), scene eight (Fred and Tony hit Pasquini's gambling den), scene eighteen (Fred and Tony hit another of Pasquini's gambling dens) and scene twenty (Fred and Tony are ambushed by Pasquini's men in a quarry). Significantly, by the time these numbers have elapsed the detectives are no nearer to catching Pasquini than they were when Rick was killed almost an hour earlier. By contrast, a majority of *Solamente*'s numbers are directly linked to the plot, but they do not show any progression or resolve narrative tensions: Stefano's second “attack” in scene twenty-seven, for example, reveals no more of his flashback than his first one in scene fourteen and, even after the murder numbers of Pedrazzi, Aloisi and Sandra's stepmother have been shown, neither the viewer nor Stefano is any closer to solving the mystery of the killer's identity.

Furthermore, while the “numbers” of both the musical and mainstream genres like the western and gangster film are typically arranged in a manner that builds up to a climax at the end of the film, in the *filone* there is commonly no such build up. *Uomini*’s most prolonged and spectacular numbers – the bike chase of scene two and the siege of scene eleven, notably the two longest scenes in the entire film – take place before even half of the film has elapsed, and there is little attempt to draw out the potential for suspense that dynamite and impending explosions clearly present in cinema. *Solamente*’s most spectacular murder sequences (the initial Andreani strangling in scene one; the stabbing of Pedrazzi in scene twenty-nine; the death by fire of Sandra’s stepmother in scene thirty-eight, and Aloisi’s death under a boat in scene forty-six) are all deployed before the final quarter of the film, and the film’s “climactic” event (Paolo’s suicide in scene fifty-six) is far shorter and less spectacular than the numbers preceding it.⁶⁹ Although each subsequent song and dance in *Singin*’ further highlights Altman’s dual focus argument by detailing the actions and reactions of Don and Kathy to plot events, at the same time bringing them closer to romantic union and bringing the film’s narrative to eventual closure, the numbers in *Uomini* and *Solamente* are best understood as a series of “shocks” distributed across the film’s duration so as to maintain viewer interest. The alternating character focus of the musical is absent from the *filone*’s numbers, replaced by an alternating focus on conflicting narrative and excessive scripts that is simply *re-stated* – rather than advanced or resolved – in these sequences.

Endings

As the point at which the dual focus structure identified is most clear, the ending of the *filone* holds special significance. The death of Pasquini at the hands of the Chief in *Uomini* is, in terms of the narrative equilibria presented in Figure 4.2.3, the decisive act that brings the film to a close. Pasquini is dead; the detectives have been saved;

⁶⁹ The same is true in a number of the other *filoni* examined. *Mannaja*’s most prolonged “number” – a sequence depicting showgirls performing a dance, intercut with a stagecoach ambush – occurs after only thirty-five minutes have elapsed, and the prolonged “topless village tour” in horror *filone* *Virus / Hell of the Living Dead* (Italy, Bruno Mattei, 1983) – referred to in Chapter Two – takes place thirty-seven minutes into the film. Science-fiction film *Contamination* deploys its most violent attraction – alien eggs hatching in human bodies, sending chunks of flesh flying – after twelve minutes, and horror film *Manhattan Baby* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1982) presents its key scene of extreme violence – an ocular mutilation – after only ten minutes.

the case is solved and a new equilibrium has been established. In light of the *filone*'s dual focus, however, narrative resolution alone is not enough to end the film: something *spectacular* must happen to signal an end to the “second script” of excess that began (in scene one's chase) before the film's narrative had even properly started – Fred and Tony decide to blow the boat up. This is also the case, to a lesser extent, in *Solamente*: the film began by focusing on excess and ends likewise when Paolo kills himself. Both these actions are explainable with reference to the films' narratives: Fred and Tony's decision to have one final “go” at Pasquini by destroying his boat is characteristic of their reckless attitude throughout, and Paolo is so wrought with guilt that he decides he cannot live any longer. Nevertheless, the rapid manner with which both *Solamente* and *Uomini* finish *immediately* after these events have taken place – without a framing epilogue to contextualise them and explicitly re-establish equilibrium in the films – suggests that their *excessive* function is far more pertinent than the narrative that they convey.

Such abrupt endings are widespread throughout the *filoni*. No sooner has Voller, the central villain of *Mannaja*, been killed by the protagonist's axe than the credits are rolling; the hunchbacked villain of *Roma a mano armata* is shot five times by the film's protagonist and the film ends with a freeze-frame, similar to *Solamente*'s final shot, at the exact moment when he falls down. The end credits of “Nazisploitation” World War Two horror *filone Lager SSadis Kastrat Kommandantur / SS Experiment Camp* (Italy, Sergio Garrone, 1976) have started rolling even before the body of the film's Gestapo “hero” has hit the ground (he falls and dies soon after, obscured by the titles) and, to take an even more extreme example, horror *filone Zombi 3: Le notti del terrore / Zombie 3: Nights of Terror* (Italy, Andrea Bianchi, 1981) ends *before* its protagonist has been killed, rolling the credits over a freeze-frame close-up of her face being menaced by numerous zombie hands. In all of these sequences the films end *before* the plot can comment on the death of their “central” protagonists and antagonists, “wind up” the narrative or establish a new equilibrium: narrative is effectively *severed* after the final spectacular act has taken place.

A central theme that arises from these findings is the use of *freeze-frame* endings, which occur with notable frequency across the films examined. The predominance of this device - and the frequently-used “FINE” end title cards – in the *filone* highlights a

central aspect of its dual focus structure, for such formal intervention is required to close the excess script of the film which, existing outwith narrative restraints, could effectively continue *ad infinitum*. Moreover, a significant number of these freeze-frames take place not after but *during* these events. *Uomini*'s boat-detonation, *Zombi 3*'s unfinished attack and *Contamination*'s final shot (a freeze-frame of an alien egg "hatching" and spraying acid all over the camera) all quite literally *pause* the apparatus, creating attractions through an overinvestment in the violent image and highlighting in the process the comparative arbitrariness of the narrative script during these final scenes. There is no sense given in *Uomini* of how Fred and Tony feel about Pasquini's death, how their lives have changed, what they plan to do next or, most crucially, how and why the Chief appeared as a *deus ex machina* to close the narrative. Furthermore, *Solamente* does not explain how Paolo's suicide will affect Stefano – who is, after all, the film's "protagonist" – and no shots are used that show Stefano's reaction to it. In the *filone*, once the killer's body has hit the ground, the last piece of property has been blown up or the final villain has been killed, there is simply no need to show anything more. The film can quite happily freeze without the need for epilogue or summary, for it is the focus on the excess script that begins, sets in motion and brings to a close its structure.

4.4 Conclusion

As the different theoretical models that this chapter's analysis has drawn from are primarily structuralist in origin, I would like to now conclude by drawing my arguments together and presenting my *own* schemata summarising narrative, excess and the dual focus nature of the *filone*. In truth, my findings seem to point towards a *reconciliation* of the two quotes presented at the beginning of this chapter for, as Barthes notes, there are two distinctive scripts at work in the films: one which focuses on presenting the interruption of an initial equilibrium and the tracing of the dispersal and refiguration of its components, and one which has little logic, foregrounds the "absolute" filmic apparatus and should be received without reflection. While all narrative films by their very nature have these two scripts running concurrently throughout their structures, what is most interesting in the *filoni* – and what fascinates Gunning so much with the early films that he discusses – is the constant struggle and

interplay between them (1994, p.191). To illustrate this, I have condensed the findings of this chapter into six key assertions, listed below:

- i) *The filone typically presents a central discernible narrative where equilibrium is disrupted then ultimately re-established through violence, but it is on the unregulated visual and aural information superfluous to this that it places greatest emphasis;*
- ii) *This emphasis results in the weakening of diegetic cohesion, causality, motivation, character agency and trajectory throughout the filone, undermining conventional narrative pleasures such as suspense, character identification and closure, as well as its narrative's deeper symbolic and thematic aspects;*
- iii) *These narrative pleasures are consistently eschewed in the filoni in favour of the more immediate pleasures to be presented by spectacle and the revelation of the films' "material identity": narrative developments are frequently delayed, allowing the films to focus on scenes of spectacle superfluous to their plots;*
- iv) *The filone typically adopts an episodic structure to maintain viewer interest by explicitly marking its beginnings and endings with excessive elements highlighting the joins between scenes;*
- v) *Cinematic excess is frequently figured in the filone's violent and spectacular "numbers" which integrate to varying degrees with the narrative surrounding them;*
- vi) *The filone's numbers frequently fail to resolve narrative tensions or reconcile thematic antagonisms, instead typically foregrounding and dramatising – without resolving – the struggle between narrative and excess scripts.*

Having set up and illustrated this model in this chapter, the question arises of where such focus leaves the *viewer* of these films: as Gunning notes of the attraction (and as the schema above infers) the central difference between these focuses is one of *address*. With this in mind, I would like to turn, now, to an investigation of how these focuses shift on a closer *shot-by-shot* level in the films and, most importantly, how they position the viewer as a result.

Chapter Five

Violence, Attractions and the *Filone* Viewer

5.1 Introduction

In her historical study of Italian cinema, Landy places a distinct emphasis on the *non-narrative* pleasures that the *filone* might offer in comparison with the mainstream film, suggesting that:

Though it is often the case that popular cinema of the 1960s and 1970s gets shortchanged in relation to auteur cinema, there is evidence that certain films identified with the spaghetti western (or with horror) are quite self-conscious about their status as cinema and are actively involved in exploring the nature of the cinematic medium and the role of spectatorship.

(2000, p.200)

Although Landy in fact never expands on the specific ways in which the *filoni* explore the nature of the medium and foreground the role of the viewer, her argument recalls my own findings, which have thus far identified a predominance of distinctly *non-narrative* viewing pleasures across the films examined. In attempting to further unlock this process, three central questions arise: firstly, exactly how does the excessive script identified in the previous chapter work against narration between the *shots*, rather than the scenes, of the *filoni*? Secondly, how is violence frequently intensified and turned into an attraction in scenes like this? And finally, if the main viewing pleasures of the *filone* do not involve narrative, then what precisely do they “do” for (and commonly *to*) their viewers?

Addressing these questions is the central guiding aim of this chapter, which shall build on the work of Chapter Four by closely examining the relationship between excess, narrative and violence within the *filone*'s numbers. To do this I shall adopt a two-part structure, the first section being built around the close textual analysis and comparison of western *filone* *Mannaja / A Man Called Blade* (Italy, Sergio Martino, 1977) with mainstream western *Shane* (USA, George Stevens, 1952), which offers a useful model of mainstream narration against which the *filone*'s deviations can be charted. This of course continues the practice of comparing the *filone* with the

mainstream film that my paracinematic approach has employed, but my methodology at this stage is equally indebted to the work of Eleftheriotis, who puts forward a similar comparison of the opening sequences of *Johnny Oro / Ringo and his Golden Pistol* (Italy, Sergio Corbucci, 1966) and *The Searchers* (USA, John Ford, 1956) to illustrate the former's deviation from the ideological binaries embodied in the mainstream western. Although he brings out some fascinating disparities between the processes at work in both films, Eleftheriotis' approach is largely concerned with issues of nation, and consequently eschews the discourses of violence and spectatorship that I am primarily occupied with.⁷⁰ Bearing this in mind, I would like to take a similar approach by complementing his arguments through an analysis of space, time and narration in both films.

Mannaja – like the majority of *filoni* – begins with a violent number, providing an intriguing insight into the ways in which excess and narrative scripts vie for dominance in the films: close analysis of this sequence will allow me to scrutinise the relationships between shots that are typically set up and often undermined throughout the *filoni*. By drawing out contrasts and comparisons with *Shane*'s regulation of excess – which is, by comparison, highly economical – I shall investigate the extent to which *Mannaja*'s narration sets up the “clear, seamless space” that Thompson identifies as characteristic of the mainstream film (1986, p.138), in the process interrogating Chapter Two's assertion that excess frequently disrupts spatial and temporal relations in the *filone*'s numbers. While the previous chapter identified the weakening of causality, motivation and trajectory as key features across the *filone*'s narrative structure, throughout this analysis I shall illustrate the extent to which such discrepancies also exist within the numbers themselves and, building on this, consider their effect on suspense in the sequence. This discussion will also allow me to assess my earlier claim that films like *Mannaja* are marked by the “games of spectatorship” that they often play with their viewers.

These games in fact offer a convenient segue to the second section of the chapter, which draws on my analysis of *Mannaja* to investigate and explicitly outline the ways in which violent and spectacular actions are explicitly *presented* to the viewer as

⁷⁰ See Eleftheriotis (2001) pp.109-25.

attractions by the *filone*. Drawing on Mellencamp's (1977) work on the musical, I wish to take her lead by referring to the cinematic codes which contribute to the "to-be-looked-at-ness" that I have identified to be an essential component of the attraction. Although some of the codes that Mellencamp mentions can be quite readily transposed to the *filone*, I shall also expand her definitions by identifying other codes that are more specific to the attractions of films like *Mannaja*, in particular the "violent" nature of the apparatus alluded to in Chapter Three. Having presented my own "taxonomy of excessive devices" I shall then conclude by investigating the repercussions for the *viewer* that violent attractions present, identifying the central visual pleasures that the *filone* offers and elucidating in the process exactly what it is about these films that Landy argues foregrounds both the apparatus and the viewer.

5.2 Space, Time and Narration in the *Filone* Number

Introductions

Although ostensibly a western film, *Mannaja* presents a fascinating illustration of the intense hybridity which characterises many of the *filoni*. Initially released in 1977 at the very end of the western cycle's commercial lifespan, the film is notable for its incorporation of elements from the horror, *poliziotteschi* and *giallo* cycles that were more popular at the time. This is perhaps no surprise, given the *curriculum vitae* of its director, Sergio Martino, who up until that point had achieved success with *gialli* such as *Lo strano vizio della Signora Ward / Blade of the Ripper* (Spain / Italy, 1971), *La coda dello scorpione / Case of the Scorpion's Tail* (Spain / Italy, 1971) and *I corpi presentato tracce di violenza carnale / Torso* (Italy, Sergio Martino, (1973); *poliziotteschi* like *Milano trema – la polizia vuole giustizia / Violent Professionals* (Italy, 1973) and occasional forays into *mondo* and sex comedy with *Mille peccati...nessuna virtù / Mondo Sex* (Italy, 1969) and *Cugini carnali / High School Girl* (Italy, 1974). The background of *Mannaja*'s actors was equally diverse: leading man Maurizio Merli was at that point the "big name" of the *poliziotteschi* cycle, while the film's villain was played by British character actor John Steiner, an actor who had his roots in Italian and German drama films and who would go on to play his most recognisable role in successful *giallo* *Tenebre* (Italy, Dario Argento, 1982). Further

contributing to the multi-national, multi-lingual and multi-cyclical nature of the film was the casting of Philippe Leroy, a French actor who had made his name on a number of European crime, comedy and drama films.

These excesses of hybridity notably extend to the actual *form* of the film itself, and much of *Mannaja*'s appeal in fact resides in its playful failure to adhere to conventional models of nationality, genre and continuity. While the film's American-sounding title, which riffs on Hollywood genre films like *A Man Called Horse* (USA, Elliot Silverstein, 1970) and *A Man Called Sledge* (USA, Vic Morrow, 1970) sets *Mannaja* up as a western film, its high body count, emphasis on torture, ocular mutilation and muddy, fog-streaked mise-en-scène are more indebted to the horror and *giallo* cycles. Moreover, its horseback chase sequences and musical opening credits sequence – showing its protagonist “touring” the mythical “Wild West” – are two distinctive elements popularised by the *poliziotteschi*. The problem of categorising the film is made even more apparent by the fact that this network of filmic referents is accompanied by an often heavily-stylised soundtrack oscillating between 1970s synth-driven prog rock and contemporary guitar-led pop songs. Again, like so many of the *filoni* examined, *Mannaja* is quite plainly a “bad fit” text whose excesses of intertextuality are mirrored throughout by its similarly excessive abandonment of narrative continuities.

The film focuses on the exploits of Merli's titular hero “Blade” (who in typical western *filone* fashion is never named in its diegesis), a bounty hunter who uses an axe rather than a gun to kill his enemies. In *Mannaja*'s opening pre-credits number Blade mutilates and catches an outlaw named Burt Craven (Donald O'Brien), taking him to the mining town of Suttonville to collect his bounty. Suttonville is a bleak and puritanical town, ruled over by a wheelchair-bound, mine-owning capitalist, McGowan (Leroy), and his evil associate Voller (Steiner). Blade walks into town, wins money from Voller in a poker game and sets Craven free as a result. On his way to meet McGowan at the mine, Blade has the first of several “flashbacks” to a scene where men are shown chopping trees down in a forest: the parallel to Stefano's similar “attacks” in *Solamente Nero / The Blood Stained Shadow* (Italy, Antonio Bido, 1978) is remarkable and highlights another of the film's intertextual “borrowings”

from the *giallo* cycle.⁷¹ Blade offers to become McGowan's "commander" for a wage, but McGowan refuses, ordering him out of town. Voller and his men beat Blade up then try to kill him under a rockslide as he rides out of Suttonville: he then escapes, battered, from underneath the rocks and is nursed back to health by Angela (Martine Brochard), a dancing-girl who he meets when her troupe of entertainers pass him by.

The troupe eventually arrives in Suttonville and put on a show while Blade looks on. Meanwhile, McGowan's daughter Debra (played by Sonja Jeannine) is kidnapped by a bunch of bandits, whose massacre of the men and women in her stagecoach is intercut with shots of the performing dancing-girls (*Mannaja*'s most spectacular and prolonged number, again deployed in the first half of the film). Debra, it transpires, has been kidnapped by Voller, who is attempting to wrest control of McGowan's mining empire. McGowan then hires Blade to rescue her, and Blade's flashbacks reveal that as a child he witnessed the death of his father at the hands of McGowan's men, who felled his father's trees – crushing him underneath one of them – to drive him off his land and expand McGowan's mining empire. Despite being driven by thoughts of vengeance, Blade decides not to avenge his father's death, deciding that a better punishment would be to let McGowan "live in misery": he then sets off to give Voller McGowan's ransom in return for Debra. When he meets Voller, however, Blade realises that Debra is in fact complicit in her own kidnapping and has sought to extort her father. Having second-guessed this, Blade has hidden the money elsewhere: when Voller finds this out, he kills Angela before burying Blade up to his neck in sand, pinning his eyelids open, placing a spike underneath his chin and thereby forcing him to gaze into the searing midday sun. Before he is completely blinded Blade is rescued by Craven, who takes him to a nearby cavern to regain his eyesight and recover. As a blindfolded Blade is feeling his way around the cavern and fashioning a new axe out of stone, there is a workers' uprising at the mine and a riot ensues, during which Voller shoots McGowan in the back. Craven then rides into town and – unbeknownst to Blade – betrays his whereabouts to Voller for a bounty: Voller then sends his henchmen to the cave and Blade kills them before confronting Craven, out-drawing him and shooting him dead. The film's climax occurs when

⁷¹ To clarify, *Mannaja* was released a year before *Solamente*: the convention of flashbacks had already been established by a number of *gialli* by this stage.

Blade walks back to Suttonville and kills Voller with an axe in a protracted and spectacular “showdown” number: he then walks into the fog and the credits roll.

As this overview indicates, *Mannaja* is a film with a fairly multi-faceted narrative structure to focus on: unusually for the western *filoni*, its protagonist has a past (if not a name); discernible motivation (revenge; justice; anti-capitalism); love interest (even though no emotions are openly expressed by Blade) and an ultimate goal (to kill Voller). As the film sets out to establish the spatial and temporal relations necessary for this narrative to coherently unfold, however, discrepancies quickly emerge which undermine its cohesion. While a mainstream western film would typically place itself in a clearly defined historical and geographical locale – generally the American West between 1866 and 1914⁷² – Martino’s film gives few indications of timeframe or even country of origin. The landscapes through which Blade travels are largely featureless, covered in mud or obscured by fog: abstracted “noplaces” that bear more similarity to the Mediterranean locations where they were filmed than the clearly-recognisable “Wild West” of films like *Shane*. Blade himself presents an equally ambiguous figure; the conventional iconography of his pistol, bullet belt, open-necked shirt and Stetson being offset by an unusual costume of animal fur, long blond hair, unkempt beard⁷³ and the Native American tomahawk that he uses as a weapon. Like the landscape he walks through, the characters he encounters and the soundtrack which accompanies him, Blade is a mesh of cultural signifiers and the lack of clear spatial and temporal definition results in a weakening of narrative context across the film. There is no concentrated or preliminary narration to properly establish the film’s location, frame its historical period and immerse the viewer within its narrative: as a result, elements of mise-en-scène that typically serve symbolic, ritualistic or ideological purposes in the mainstream western (Civil war uniforms; six-guns and dollars, for example) in *Mannaja* are divested of narrative importance and rendered excessive.

⁷² As Eleftheriotis notes, this timeframe is generally accepted by theorists to be the period within which the mainstream western takes place (2001, p.10).

⁷³ One obvious antecedent for this unusual appearance is Enzo Girolami’s commercially successful *Keoma* (Italy, 1976), a key proponent of the “eco-western” cycle and a film that portrays its protagonist (played by Franco Nero) as a half-Native American with long hair and beard.

Shane, by contrast, has frequently been described as one of the best Hollywood westerns of all time⁷⁴. On its release in 1953 it was nominated for six Oscars, eventually winning one, and Paramount's promotional campaign labelled it "THE GREATEST STORY OF THE WILD WEST EVER FILMED...CREATED BY THE MASTER DIRECTOR GEORGE STEVENS"⁷⁵. The film begins with the arrival of its eponymous drifter protagonist who becomes embroiled in a dispute between a farmer – Joe Starrett, played by Van Heflin – and a greedy cattle rancher, Ryker (played by Emile Meyer). As in *Mannaja*, the battle for land and exploitation of working-class homesteaders is a central narrative theme: Ryker is trying to intimidate Starrett and a number of his friends' families off their land by threatening them with violence and damaging their property.

Shane is a mysterious stranger who, quite remarkably, has even less of a back story than Blade. His strength and ability with a pistol suggest that his past has been a violent one, but he is shown to be hard-working and moral when he settles down to help Starrett, his wife Marian (Jean Arthur) and son Joey (Brandon de Wilde) in their daily business of keeping the farm going. Ryker, however, has other plans, and his henchmen try to provoke Shane to fight them: he eventually confronts the villains (with the help of Starrett) in a prolonged barroom fistfight sequence where Ryker's men are humiliated. After this confrontation Ryker decides to call in extra help and recruits a notorious mercenary, Jack Wilson (played by Jack Palance), who kills one of Starrett's homesteader friends and tries to goad the other farmers into a fight. In the film's climactic scene, Shane for the first time accepts that he must once again use his gun and kills Wilson, Ryker and his men in a shootout before riding off, alone, into the wilderness.

I have specifically chosen the *opening* to this film – rather than a scene of violence – as a comparison point for two central reasons. Firstly, as it takes place at a point where narration is typically at the forefront in mainstream cinema and therefore presents a number of formal devices designed to immerse the viewer in the diegesis as

⁷⁴ The film in fact was recently voted by the American Film Institute as one of the top 100 American films of all time (Filmsite 1996) and along with *The Searchers* and *High Noon* (USA, Fred Zinnemann, 1952) regularly tops lists of "best Hollywood westerns".

⁷⁵ The original promotional trailer can be found as an extra on Paramount's recent DVD release of the film.

quickly as possible. Secondly, and more centrally to my comparison with *Mannaja*, even in *Shane*'s violent scenes the continuities laid down by its opening continue to regulate excess, an idea that shall be illustrated by drawing out comparisons of this sequence with later scenes in the film. Figure 5.2.1 below outlines in detail the opening sequence of *Shane*: although in total it runs at over eight minutes long I shall limit my description to the first three minutes, stopping at the point where Shane first meets Starrett.

Figure 5.2.1 Opening Sequence of *Shane* (0'00"- 3'02'')⁷⁶

| | |
|--|---|
|  <p>a</p> |  <p>b</p> |
| <p>Crossfade into XLS (23'') of mountains in background, plains in middle of frame and forest hills in foreground: with his back to the camera, Shane (Alan Ladd) rides into frame on his horse and trots down the hill to the right</p> | <p>Crossfade into XLS (35'') of plain, with forest on left and long black fence dividing the plain horizontally: the tiny silhouette of Shane's horse can just be made out, riding left to right across the frame, and he rides completely across it before the shot has finished</p> |
|  <p>c</p> | <p><i>All three of these shots are accompanied throughout by an orchestral version of the title theme, which flourishes when the title "Shane" appears: the tune is a slow-paced and sentimental frontier ballad in 4/4 with a harmonica-led coda that slowly fades in volume as the titles end</i></p> |
| <p>Crossfade into XLS (10'') of snow-capped mountains in distance, settlement in middle ground and deer drinking water from a pool in foreground: final title fades out and film begins proper</p> | |

⁷⁶ I have used letters to describe these shots, in order to differentiate the initial "opening titles" scene from the beginning of the sequence examined.



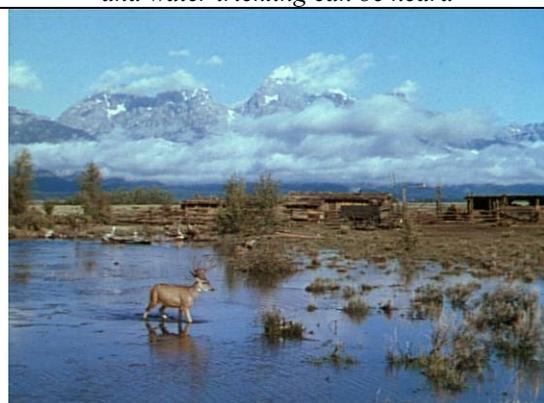
1

XLS, 5" Shot of snow-capped mountains and deer
Music continues, but fades in volume; birdsong and water trickling can be heard



2

LS pan, 4" Joey, at centre of frame, slowly crouches down with rifle, facing left: camera pans left slightly to follow his progress
Music and ambient sounds continue



3

XLS, 7" Similar to shot (1), deer turns to the right and continues to drink water
Music and ambient sounds; splashing of deer's hooves



4

CU, 3" Joey, looking left and hidden behind branches, brings the rifle up to his face and aims it
Music and ambient sounds; sound of chicken in background and leaves rustling; click of rifle



5

MS, 6" Joey's POV: deer is still drinking, Shane approaches in silhouette from the left. As the horse neighs, the deer turns round to face Shane
Music and ambient sounds; horse neighs loudly.



6

CU tilt, 5" Similar to shot (4): Joey has put the gun down and rises up to get a better view: the camera tilts up to follow him
Music and ambient sounds



7

MS, 4" Similar to shot (5): Shane is now closer, still moving towards the camera
Music and ambient sounds



8

CU tilt, 2" Similar to shot (4): Joey sinks back down behind the foliage
Music and ambient sounds



9

MS, 2" Similar to shot (5): deer runs away as Shane approaches the right hand side of the frame
Music and ambient sounds; splashing of deer's hooves



10

CU, 1" Similar to shot (4): Joey turns his back and runs away
Music and ambient sounds; leaves rustle as Joey moves away



11

XLS pan, 7" Shot of Starrett home against mountain backdrop: Joey is running right, towards the home; camera pans right to follow him and reveals Joe, who is chopping wood
Music and ambient sounds; Joey's feet splash in water; horse neighs; new accordion-led theme emerges when home is revealed



12

LS, 7" Joey continues to run up to Joe and accosts him; Joe turns left to look at Shane
Music and ambient sounds; a woman sings a frontier song (in the same key as the non-diegetic theme); Joey: "Somebody's coming, Pa"

| | |
|---|---|
|  |  |
| <p style="text-align: center;">13</p> <p>MS, 7" Joe continues movement at centre of frame, looks left then continues chopping <i>Music, ambient sounds and singing ; Joe (tiredly): "Well, let him come"</i></p> | <p style="text-align: center;">14</p> <p>LS pan, 2" Joey runs left towards the fence, leaving Joe behind; camera tracks left to follow him <i>Music, ambient sounds and singing</i></p> |
|  |  |
| <p style="text-align: center;">15</p> <p>MS, 1" Shot from outside window into Starrett home: Marian walks past from left to right, singing <i>Music, ambient sounds and singing</i></p> | <p style="text-align: center;">16</p> <p>LS, 4" Continuation of shot (14), Joey climbs onto fence to get a better look <i>Music, ambient sounds and singing</i></p> |
|  |  |
| <p style="text-align: center;">17</p> <p>LS, 6" Reverse of shot (16): Joe in foreground and Joey on the fence in the background, both with backs turned to camera and facing Shane, who approaches from the left; Joe continues to chop wood <i>Music, ambient sounds and singing</i></p> | <p style="text-align: center;">18</p> <p>LS pan, 1" Camera pans right to follow Shane as he approaches <i>Music, ambient sounds and singing</i></p> |

**19**

MS, 2" Similar to shot (15): Marian continues to sing facing away from the window
Music, ambient sounds and singing

**20**

LS pan, 4" Continuation of shot (18), camera still panning as Shane approaches the river in front of the Starrett house
Music, ambient sounds and singing; sound of horse's hooves

**21**

CU, 1" Joey looks right, inquisitively and towards the camera
Music, ambient sounds and singing

**22**

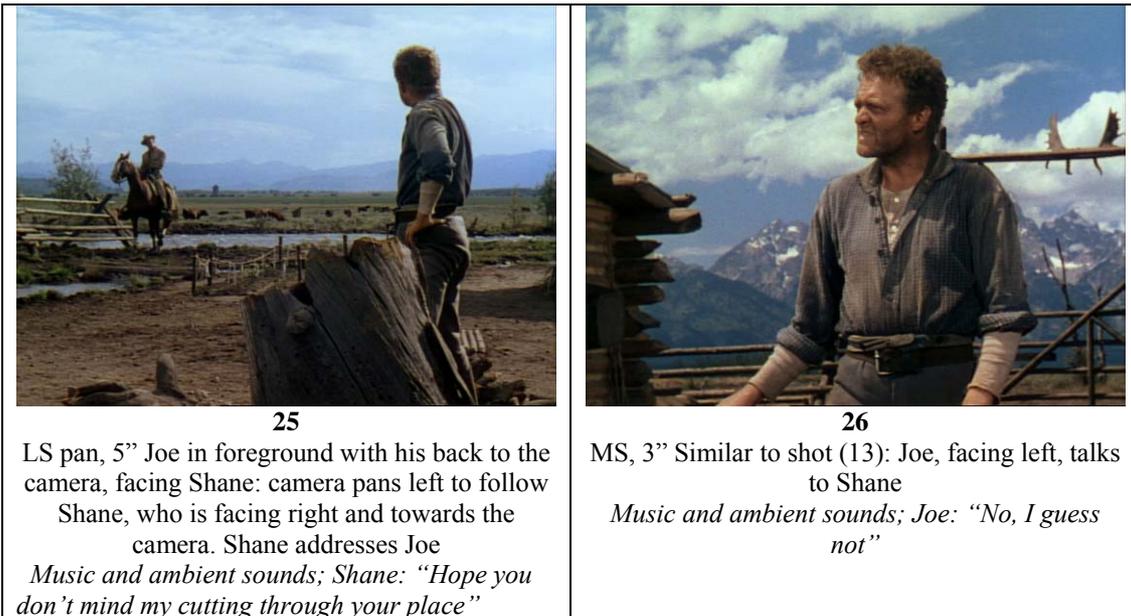
MS, 2" Joey's POV: LA shot of Shane looking left, smiling down
Music, ambient sounds and singing

**23**

CU, 2" Similar to shot (21): Joey looks back, unsmiling
Music, ambient sounds and singing

**24**

MS, 4" Similar to shot (15): Marian turns round and looks through window at Shane
Music; ambient sounds



Shane’s Regulation of Excess

Significantly, before its titles have even faded *Shane* makes its narrative space abundantly clear. Behind the typically rugged “western” font of the titles themselves, shot (a) works as an establishing shot, presenting a space with three discernible planes (forest, plain and mountains) into which Shane enters from the left, travelling right and away from the camera. A crossfade into shot (b) formally marks the passing of time as Shane continues his trajectory across the frame from left to right, leaving the forest and crossing the plain, the mountains in the background acting as a constant reminder of the film’s Wyoming location. Within a mere two shots the film has not only established a system of spatial and temporal continuity but also – and most importantly for the classical western – seamlessly located it within a wider network of geographical, ideological and cultural referents. This is firstly accomplished by the setting, which clearly evokes the untamed wilderness that the men and women of the frontier would work to urbanise: indeed, characters in the film explicitly discuss their attempts to “tame” both the land and the Cheyenne Indians who preceded them. As shot (b) shows, however, this is a process that has already begun, with the man-made fence that dissects the plain acting as a literal embodiment of the frontier itself: the line between garden and desert; civilisation and savagery; individuality and community and all of the other structural antimonies essential to the work of Kites

(1969) and the other mainstream genre theorists cited in the previous chapter. The presence of this fence also provides one of many subtle *temporal* signposts fixing the events within the historical period described,⁷⁷ and works in conjunction with the antiquated lettering of the font and the frontier ballad soundtrack to achieve this effect. In similar fashion, the deeper *thematic* conflicts of the film are reiterated by Shane's progress from the wilderness of the forest to the civilisation of the plains, a move figured by his literal crossing of the frontier boundary in shot (b) and later bracketed by the closing shot of the film which reiterates shot (a), this time showing Shane riding back into the forest towards the camera. Like the archetypal loner cowboy of the classical Western, Shane comes from outside society, enters society, rights the wrongs of society through violence, then leaves society, a narrative arc framed explicitly by the film's opening and closing shots.

In the shots that follow the titles, a number of mechanisms emerge which work to present a coherent and consistent sense of space and time, the first of which is the constant inclusion of ambient sound in the sequence. Birds singing; water trickling; cows mooing; chickens clucking; Marian singing a traditional American ballad – all of these sounds work in conjunction with the images to produce a unifying spatial and temporal effect, at the same time reinforcing the agrarian theme essential to the film's plot. The use of foley sound in this manner has a suturing function on the joints between shots, but also has an important bearing on the articulation of *off-screen* space, reinforcing space within the frame while implying other space outwith it. Moreover, the fact that the slow fading in of these sounds is mirrored by the fading out of the title theme ensures a soft and seamless transition between titles and film proper, further integrating the space presented with the cross-faded shots that preceded it. A second factor is the film's use of frequent long and extreme long shots that continually establish, contextualise and re-establish the geography of the Starrett homestead as well as the positions of the characters within it. As Figure 5.2.1 also illustrates, this process is further bolstered by a third device – continuity editing – which presents a system of recurrent shots and shot-reverse-shot pairings that also serve to anchor and reiterate character positions within the space presented.

⁷⁷ The fence has presumably been built by someone to section off part of the land as their "claim" – an activity reflected in the land disputes that are key to *Shane*'s narrative.

This is to say nothing of the narrative and symbolic implications of *Shane*'s organisation of space and time, however. Recurrent shots and framings at this early stage work to organise hierarchies and position the characters within the narrative, a clear example of this being shot (15); a medium shot of Marian framed behind her window that is reiterated five times in the sequence. On a literal level this shot places her in the house away from the men, but far more interesting are the connotations that it presents. Marian is a mother and wife, confined to the kitchen while the males in her family work outside the domestic sphere: the film's first verbal introduction to her in fact occurs later on in the sequence when Joe tells Shane "My place ain't very much yet but I'll tell you one thing – my wife sure can cook". Just as the wall separates her from Shane and the men, so too is Marian separated from the film's action scenes: she thus remains marginal and lacking in agency throughout, perpetuating the frontier myth's sexual oppositions which typically depict women as passive, domestic characters who exist to support, cook and clean for the men and boys of action who are busy working the land and forging the identity of a new civilisation.⁷⁸

Of equal import, however, is Marian's status as mere *onlooker* to the events and her inability to return Shane's gaze when he looks at her later in the opening sequence. *Shane* in fact is full of shots of her looking in his direction (when he is teaching Joey how to shoot, or when she dances with him at the Fourth of July celebration midway through the film, for example) and through these shots there is a suggestion that she has feelings for Shane. That the film refuses to develop this theme and align the viewer's point-of-view with Marian's merely highlights the final and most important way in which spatial cohesion is maintained in this sequence, namely by its frequent attempts to establish a formalised and *protagonist-based* point-of-view system. It is no coincidence that the fifth shot of the sequence should be a point-of-view shot from Joey's and not Marian's perspective, for all of the decisive narrative scenes – and almost all of the violent scenes – in *Shane* are mediated from this position. It is from Joey's point-of-view (shot 5) that Shane's approach is first presented and from behind Joey's back that Shane is depicted leaving at the end of the film. It is through Joey's eyes that Shane is first shown in profile (shot 22), a medium shot from a

⁷⁸ McDonald (1988) gives a detailed and interesting overview of gender roles in the mainstream western.

characteristically low angle that would become immortalised on the film's poster. Finally, it is a hidden Joey who watches Shane beat Ryker's men up in the barroom fistfight, and at the end of the film who sees Shane kill Ryker and his henchmen. Unlike his mother, who can only be seen to be seeing, Joey occupies a privileged position within the film's spectatorial hierarchy.

To sum up, the opening sequence of *Shane* presents a representative model of narration in the mainstream genre film against which the (non)conformities of the *filone* can be accurately measured and described, for its excessive script is continually regulated at the behest of narrative exposition through the establishing of clear spatial, temporal and thematic continuities. Excess is discernibly present as an undercurrent throughout the shots examined, particularly in shots like shot (c) which present potentially excessive elements: painterly composition, the deep staging of the deer in the foreground and the dramatic snow-capped mountains in the background, and the use of a horizontal line to create balance and symmetry in the frame, not to mention the inherent excess of the extra-diegetic title superimposed on these images. Crucially, however, each of these elements is entirely *integrated* with and crucial to *Shane's* narration and its wider thematic aspects. The painterly composition of the Wyoming mountains may be excessive, but it is only excessive to lay emphasis on the idyllic, untamed nature of the Starrett's environment and in the process establish a peaceful equilibrium that is disrupted by the arrival of Ryker and his henchmen, who invade this space from the urban environment of their town. The deep staging of the deer and mountains equally creates an image that is enjoyable to look at in itself, but as shots (2)-(10) show the more immediate purpose of this shot is to place Joey within an integrated point-of-view system as he looks at the deer, at the same time establishing his *narrative* point-of-view as the dominant within the film. Even the potential threat that titles pose to the diegesis is carefully regulated within *Shane*, for their earthy colour tones and rugged, "hand-hewn" typeface not only complement the colour tones that surround them but also subtly reinforce the frontier myth of "taming the wilderness", signalling forward to Joe's introduction in shot (13) when he is shown literally hewing wood from a tree himself.

The fact that these relationships *remain* established throughout *Shane's* violent scenes also highlights a central contrast with the *filone's* more unstable spectacular and

violent numbers. There are only four decisive acts of violence in the film, and each is vital in changing the course of the narrative: Shane and Starrett first fight Ryker's men; Wilson provokes and shoots dead one of the homesteaders; Shane brawls with Starrett then knocks him out to prevent him from confronting Wilson and, finally, Shane shoots Wilson, Ryker and his henchmen dead. While both fistfights prove to be the most prolonged violent scenes within the film, they are given coherence throughout not only by a rigid system of eyeline matches, establishing and re-establishing shots, continuity edits and ambient sounds but also by the fact that they are mediated, like so many of the scenes in this film, through the point-of-view of Joey as onlooker. As the previous chapter noticed, scenes of violence are integrated with narrative to a far greater extent in mainstream genre films such as *Shane* than they are in *filoni* like *Mannaja*: as a result the same rules of spatial and temporal continuity apply across violent scenes and narrative scenes alike. There is simply too much at stake narratively and ideologically in these violent scenes for the film to *undermine* these continuities, and as a consequence narrative and excess remain in harmony throughout.

This is not the case in *Mannaja*, however, which in typical *filone* style begins by foregrounding and focusing on its excessive elements. As the summary outlined on the next page in Figure 5.2.2 illustrates, the way in which space and time are organised in *Mannaja* often jars with *Shane*'s hermetic narration and controlled excess:

Figure 5.2.2 Opening Sequence of *Mannaja* (0'00"-2'05'')

| | |
|--|--|
|  |  |
| <p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p>LS, 6" Shot of foggy swamp with reeds in foreground and fog obscuring frame <i>Bird croaks in background; ominous-sounding monochordal synth (with artificial "choir" timbre and heartbeat pulse) fades in</i></p> | <p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <p>LS Pan/Tilt, 9" High-angle CU of foggy swamp: Craven's boot enters the frame and camera moves up to centre him as he runs into the distance; Craven falls down into the swamp then gets up and continues running with his back to camera <i>Synth; splashing sounds</i></p> |
|  |  |
| <p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>CU Track, 3" Handheld shot following behind Craven as he runs: he turns round to look at the camera then continues running <i>Synth; splashing</i></p> | <p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p>LS, 4" Shot of foggy swamp from higher angle than shot (1) <i>Synth; splashing</i></p> |
|  |  |
| <p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p>CU (Slow-motion) Track, 5" LA shot of horse's hooves splashing in water, camera follows their progress towards the camera and to the left <i>Synth; hooves splash but with louder, reverberating, stylised echo</i></p> | <p style="text-align: center;">6</p> <p>CU, 6" LA shot of Craven's boots splashing in water, running towards the camera <i>Synth; loud reverberating splashes</i></p> |



7

CU, 7" Handheld and unstable shot of Craven looking left towards the camera; bewildered and distressed, he looks behind him then looks left again

Synth; reverberating hoof splashes; heavy breathing



8

CU (Slow-motion), 6" LA shot similar to shot (5), although this time the hooves are moving left to right towards the camera

Synth; loud reverberating splashes



9

CU Pan/Tilt, 4" LA shot similar to shot (6): Craven's boots running towards camera, first left then right; he falls down face first then gets up

Synth; loud reverberating splashes; louder splash when Craven falls, accompanied by a grunt



10

CU Tilt, 2" Similar to shot (3): Craven continues to get up, looks back at and runs directly away from the camera; camera tracks up to follow him

Synth; heartbeat now steadily louder; splashes; heavy breathing



11

MS Track, 3" Craven, almost completely obscured by fog and glare from the sun, runs towards the camera

Synth; splashes; heavy breathing



12

LS Track, 6" Handheld shot moving through fog and past trees into a forest

Synth continues, begins to whistle in high pitch; splashes

| | |
|--|---|
|  |  |
| <p style="text-align: center;">13</p> <p>LS, 7" Craven, again with the sun behind him and fog obscuring him, stumbles towards the camera from right to left and exits the frame <i>Synth; splashes</i></p> | <p style="text-align: center;">14</p> <p>MS (Slow-motion) Track, 9" Blade and his horse ride from left-right into the frame, obscured by fog; camera tracks back with them <i>Synth; splashes and louder, echoing hooves</i></p> |
|  |  |
| <p style="text-align: center;">15</p> <p>CU Pan, 2" Shot of Craven's face: he runs from left to right, looking right <i>Synth; splashes</i></p> | <p style="text-align: center;">16</p> <p>LS, 2" Craven, obscured by trees and fog, falls on his face, facing left, then gets up <i>Synth; loud splash when Craven falls</i></p> |
|  |  |
| <p style="text-align: center;">17</p> <p>CU Pan / Tilt, 11" Craven's face as he continues to get up; camera pans left and tracks up to follow his face as he runs left then stops, rests against a tree and looks around. Fog then obscures the screen again <i>Synth and heartbeat at their loudest now; heavy breathing</i></p> | <p style="text-align: center;">18</p> <p>LS Pan, 5" Camera pans from left to right across the foggy swamp and trees <i>Synth and heartbeat continue at high volume; echoing hooves</i></p> |

**19**

CU, 4" Craven, now clearly distressed and his face covered in mud, looks left, right, then left again

Synth and heartbeat ; echoing hooves louder now; horse shrieks just before the cut

**20**

LS, 2" Shadowy figure of Blade and horse in the trees

Synth and heartbeat ; horse shriek continues

**21**

CU, 3" Shot of Craven's terrified face; he moves to do something, looking right

Synth and heartbeat

**22**

CU, 0.5" Shot of Craven's hand drawing gun from holster, facing right

Synth and heartbeat ; sound of gun being drawn.

**23**

MS (Slow-motion), 5" Blade, his face still obscured by fog, pulls out his axe and throws it from right to left

Synth and heartbeat ; as axe leaves Blade's hand there is a whirring sound

**24**

CU (Slow-motion) Track, 0.5" Shot of axe flying through the air from right to left

Synth and heartbeat; whirring continues

| | |
|---|---|
|  |  |
| <p style="text-align: center;">25</p> <p>MS, 0.5” LA shot of Craven, facing right as the axe hits the tree and chops his hand off. He screams and looks left at his severed stump <i>Synth and heartbeat ; loud and wet “thump” as axe hits tree; louder scream as Craven reacts</i></p> | <p style="text-align: center;">26</p> <p>CU (Slow-motion), 6” Craven screams in agony, his head pulled back <i>Synth and heartbeat continue; screaming continues</i></p> |
|  | |
| <p style="text-align: center;">27</p> <p>XCU, 10” Shot of the brim of Blade’s hat as he raises his head, looking left towards the camera as his narrowed eyes dominate the frame <i>Heartbeat stops; screaming dies out as bass and harmonica of title song begin</i></p> | |

Spatial (dis)Continuities

From its very first shot *Mannaja* displays a tendency to confound rather than clarify the spaces where its action unfolds, shot (1) presenting a long shot of a fog-streaked swamp with trees in the background and reeds in the foreground. Like *Shane*'s opening shot this presents a deep image laying out three distinct spatial planes, but the fact that they are obscured by the thick fog and reeds makes it difficult to identify what is going on within the frame. Precisely where and when this swamp is located remains unclear: the dry croak of a bird is heard in the background, an eerie-sounding monochordal synth fades in and there is a cut to a high-angle close-up of the muddy

swamp (shot 2), into which a pair of boots stumbles in close-up. Just as Shane entered the landscape from behind the camera, so too does the owner of these boots, Craven: as the camera pans left and tilts up to reveal him, however, the image is completely obscured by the sun's glare, rendering the frame almost completely white. While Joey, the first character to be revealed in *Shane*, was introduced in long-shot then immediately positioned within the film's narrative space by aligning the viewer with his point-of-view, throughout these opening shots Craven's identity and position remains vague. As shot (2) continues, the mist clears slightly and Craven is revealed in silhouette as he continues to run away from the camera, the loud splashing sound of his boots echoing artificially over the synth soundtrack. The film then cuts to a hand-held mobile close-up (shot 3) following Craven as he continues to run with his back turned to the camera: he turns to the camera twice during this shot but each time his facial features are obscured by the glare and the fog, further confounding any attempts to identify him. There follows a cutaway to a long shot of the swamp (shot 4), which within the mainstream film would commonly be used to re-establish spatial relations. Again, such conventions are eschewed: although the fog is beginning to clear slightly, this shot reveals no more than a static and empty landscape devoid of action, its only spatial connection to Craven being the sound of his wet footsteps on the soundtrack.

It is at this point where excess – already beginning to rise as a result of the spatial ambiguities created by shots (1)-(4) – becomes the primary object of focus. The camera cuts to a low angle slow-motion tracking close-up of a horse's hooves splashing in the mud and approaching the camera (shot 5), each step accompanied by a loud splash that – in contrast with Craven's splashes – reverberates loudly, despite the open air acoustic landscape of the swamp. Although the *mise-en-scène* of this sequence seems to place both the horse and Craven in the same geographical locale, the fact that *Mannaja's* soundtrack at this point seems to be placing them in different *sonic spaces* (the hooves reverberate in a manner that suggests they are located in a cave or hall) further confounds spatial continuities here. This combination of elements creates a distinct attraction by combining an “exotic” view (in this case an extreme low angle shot that almost places the camera in the swamp itself) with the revelation of the apparatus through slow-motion cinematography and the discontinuity of the sounds that accompany this shot. There is then another low angle close-up, this time of Craven's boots (shot 6), now running *towards* the camera, and it is only after this

when the film provides a close-up of his face from which he can be identified for the first time (shot 7).

Two things immediately stand out from this sequence, the first being the fact that, even after forty seconds and seven shots, the positioning and trajectory of Craven and the horse are no clearer than they were when the sequence began: the fog-shrouded setting aside, few of these shots bear any definite spatial relation to one another. Of the opening sequence's twenty-seven shots, there is in fact not one that presents both Craven and his pursuer in the same frame, and frequent discontinuous edits between shots further undermine the stability of the space presented. Where *Shane's* economy of opening shots quickly established a coherent narrative space for events to unfold in, locating the film at the same time within a distinct historical and national *milieu*, *Mannaja's* opening shots by contrast fail to do this, creating a sense of disorientation extending beyond the confusion of Craven's character to the experience of the viewer. In the second part of shot (2) and throughout shot (3), for example, Craven is running away from the camera with his back turned, yet in shots (6) and (7) he is running directly towards it, a contradictory pattern repeated throughout the sequence. Furthermore, the many close-up shots used and stylised angles presented by shots (2), (5) and (6) not only fragment the space presented but also present overtly exaggerated viewpoints that draw more attention to themselves than they do any progress Craven may be making.

Drawing this together, the second and most remarkable aspect of this sequence is the distinct lack of *suspense* effected by its unclear trajectory. Within the context of a space created and established through continuity editing and eyeline matches, alternating shots of feet and hooves would serve to heighten narrative tension by implying that the gap between Craven and his pursuer was closing. In the absence of any previous shots which establish this gap, however, these shots are more noteworthy for the spectacle that they provide: the hooves, feet and splashes remain centralised within the widescreen frame and are held in close-up throughout, their appeal further accentuated by the loud and similarly stylised foley splash sounds that accompany them. Like many of the shots in the sequence – and from across the *filoni* – they also come from an “impossible” angle existing completely outwith any system of character or narrative point-of-view. Finally, the fact that these shots are presented

in slow-motion further increases the emphasis that the film is placing on their exoticism, for by literally slowing the apparatus down the viewer is given more time to appreciate the raw composition and fluidity of movement within the frame without having to pay heed to the suspense that they create.

Although the absence of any concrete spatial links between the shots presented creates a level of discontinuity in this sequence, on closer scrutiny a number of more abstract visual links between the images presented are discernible. In fact, just as the sequence from *Shane* relies throughout on the reiteration of certain key framings, so too does *Mannaja*. This is firstly evident through the visual doubling of low angle close-ups of hooves and feet in the sequence, with shots (5) and (6) as well as shots (8) and (9) forming similarly-framed pairings. Shots of Craven running from the camera – (2), (3) and (10) – and close-ups of his face – (7), (15), (17), (19), (21) and (26) – also work as loose reiterations of each other. While these recurring shots are used in *Shane* to re-establish and update the spatial relations between characters, within *Mannaja* these shots largely appear without warning and provide little information about the positioning of the characters. Although this more abstract type of visual patterning is generally uncommon and is a stylistic feature particular to *Mannaja*,⁷⁹ the fact that the scene is punctuated by stylistically excessive shot pairings like this and *not* devices of continuity editing casts further aspersions on the importance of the film's narrative focus at this point.

As spatially illogical as much of this scene is, there nonetheless remain in place a number of devices which provide continuity to many of its shots. The constant presence of the electronic score and synthesised heartbeat, for example, helps to maintain a tone of apprehension throughout, and the articulation of off-screen sonic space through the use of splashing sounds – as in *Shane* – also helps smooth over the cracks between shots. Editing, too, is not wholly discontinuous across the sequence: there are numerous action matches between the shots of Craven running and even an attempt to provide a shot from Craven's (un-cued) point-of-view with shot (12). The

⁷⁹ *Mannaja* is quite notable in this aspect, as one of its later sequences (cross-cutting between an ambush and the spectacle of girls dancing) explicitly makes a visual parallel between the blood-red exit wounds and the red pom-poms on the garters of the dancers by repeatedly cutting between them and positioning them at a similar place within the frame. Similar links are also established between shots of dancing feet and hooves in a reiteration of the parallel set up by shots of Craven's feet in the film's opening sequence.

argument here is not that the film completely *fails* to create spatial relations within and between its shots: this would render the sequence completely unintelligible. What *Mannaja* does fail to do, however, is establish enough spatial cohesion for any real narrative development and suspense to take place, in the process foregrounding the excessive script created by “unmotivated” close-ups, frequent camera movement, extreme low angle shots and stylised sound effects. Discontinuity edits and exaggerated camera positions are not the only devices which effect disorientation in this sequence, however: of equal note in *Mannaja* are the thick fog and sun glare in shots like (2), (4), (11) and (14) which undermine spatial relations even further by obscuring the frame itself. To problematise this, it could be argued that the partial vision created by these shots works towards distinctly narrative ends: Craven himself is captured and mutilated as a result of his disorientation, and the constant off-screen threat that Blade presents (implied largely by the echoing of his horse’s hooves) is essential to both the suspense of the scene and its horror-influenced intertextuality.⁸⁰ Again, however, such suspense relies upon spatial cohesion, a sense of trajectory and the alignment of the viewer with Craven’s narrative point-of-view, none of which are made sufficiently clear in the sequence.

A better way of understanding these “obscured” shots is to view them as examples of the “games” of spectatorship identified by previous chapters. In her work on the (American) “slasher” film, Dika describes how some of the central pleasures of that genre rest on the various “games” that the films play with the expectations of their viewers, arguing that:

These films allow the audience to participate in the stalker film game: a game of terror, stimulating both in its predictability and its surprises, but one also infused with an ideological purpose.

(1990, p.139)

Where the games played between the film and the viewer in Dika’s account are primarily reliant on the play with narrative expectations and oscillating point-of-views, however, the spectatorial games in *filoni* like *Mannaja* seem to be based far

⁸⁰ Many of the western *filoni* draw on horror motifs and often present their protagonists not only in terms of gothic *mise-en-scène* but also as an omnipresent threat with unclear spatial relations to the other characters. This idea is in fact carried to its logical conclusion in *Se sei vivo, spara! / Django, Kill...If you Live, Shoot!* (Spain / Italy, Giulio Questi, 1967) where the film’s “undead” hero is able to disappear and teleport himself from one place to the next within the frame.

more on delaying and confounding (in their episodic numbers) the points at which attractions will be presented rather than on narrative developments. Furthermore, while the games referred to in earlier chapters have involved a distinctive look *away* from violent acts, the central game being played in this sequence is one of *frustrated* rather than “transferred” vision. Furthermore, *Mannaja*’s sequence seems quite complicit in its foregrounding of such games, for when Blade is introduced for the first time in the final shot of the sequence (shot 28), it is through an extreme close-up of his *eyes*: there is no fog obscuring these shots (indeed, the fog quickly dissipates in shots (25) and (26) to provide the viewer with a clearer view of Craven’s mutilation), suggesting that he, far more than Craven (or, more significantly, the viewer) has a clearer vision of when the next spectacular or violent act will occur.

This idea of maintaining the viewer’s involvement in number scenes (where narrative is typically unimportant) through the delaying of violence and spectacle can be traced across the *filone*, finding its apotheosis in both the prolonged “showdown” numbers of the western and the lengthy “killer point-of-view” murder sequences characteristic of the *giallo*. To take perhaps the most famous example, *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo / The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (Italy / Spain, Sergio Leone, 1966) presents a climactic three-way standoff during which the film spends *five minutes* alternating between (mostly facial close-up) shots of the three duellists (played by Clint Eastwood, Eli Wallach and Lee Van Cleef) before shots are fired and the body of Van Cleef’s villain falls to the ground. On one hand, interest is maintained throughout this sequence by the foregrounding of excessive elements (extreme facial close-ups; panoramic shots of the landscape; the symmetrical framing of the three figures within the widescreen frame and Ennio Morricone’s loud and dynamic orchestral accompaniment) but the suspense generated by the narrative at this point (who will be killed as a result of this duel?) is matched and surpassed by a suspense created by the delaying of the attraction (when will the sequence present its inevitable act of violence and spectacle?).

Another film that quite explicitly plays these games of spectatorship is *giallo Lo squartatore di New York / New York Ripper* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1982) which presents a murder scene that quite playfully confounds viewer expectations to create its own distinct “surprise”. On the Staten Island ferry a woman is attacked by a faceless knife-

wielding assailant: in close-up the blade is shown entering her stomach, but before the camera can linger on this there is a cut to a close-up of the ferry's funnel as her screams are drowned out by its loud blare. The game being played at this stage is that of the look away from the act presented, substituting its violence with that of another attraction (created by the "violence" of the disorientating cut to an unrelated close-up and the surprise aural "jolt" that accompanies it). There is then a cut to an extreme long shot of the ferry and, as her screams have died out, the film appears to present this "re-establishing" shot as a formal mechanism for closing the scene. The next shot, however, cuts from this extreme long shot to a prolonged and disturbing extreme *close-up* of the knife slicing the woman's bloody stomach, a shot which seemingly comes from nowhere and provides a shocking surprise "punch line" to the spectatorial game that this sequence has been playing.

Temporality

It is not just disruption of space that results from the focus on excess in *Mannaja*'s opening sequence: the *temporal* relationships set up between its shots are often equally unclear. Once again *Shane* presents a useful model illustrating how the mainstream film typically minimises excess, for its opening sequence clearly and logically demarcates two periods of narrative time: Shane's progress through the wilderness and his eventual arrival at the Starrett household. The former is subdivided into three stages which are quite clearly marked via a series of crossfades, formally indicating that time has elapsed between the first, second and third shots. These very smooth transitions act as preservative agents for the narrative, softening the joins between the three distinct temporalities of shots (a), (b) and (c) while explicitly marking the passage of time. In contrast, Shane's subsequent arrival and interaction with the Starretts patently occurs in real time, a process initiated by the absence of crossfades after the transition between shots (b) and (c). Notably, there are no more crossfades until the very end of the sequence, when a shot of Shane, Joe and Joey entering the house for dinner dissolves into a shot of the four characters eating, allowing the "time" of this narrative scene to be explicitly delineated by the temporal bracketing system of the crossfade. Moreover, the use of ambient sound and music

throughout temporally binds the shots together, with volume fades on the film's musical score formally marking the transitions between scenes.

Where *Shane* quite evidently lays out a taut and straightforward timeline for the events depicted, *Mannaja*'s scene instead offers a far more ambiguous set of temporal relations. The habitual lack of continuity edits and re-establishing shots ensures that there are no concrete time links between the images presented; the only constants in this scene being the figure of Craven running, the fragmented close-ups of his pursuer, the squelch of their footsteps and the rumble of the synthesiser score. The duration of these shots also notably fails to create any sense of escalating narrative tension or suspense: their length and editing rhythm remains largely unchanged throughout. This is further effected by the fact that *Mannaja*'s soundtrack does little to heighten tensions present in the narrative. The ominous nature of the synthesiser chord and the heartbeats of increasing volume help create a distinctive sense that the sequence is building up to something, but as the scene's metanarrative progresses Craven's rising on-screen anxiety is met with the off-screen indifference of the soundtrack: although the heartbeats increase in volume they do not get any faster, and the drone of the score does not change in volume or tone. Moreover, this particular score has no clearly defined rhythmic structure underpinning it, and therefore conveys a leisurely tone that is reflected in the unhurried manner with which this sequence delays its climactic act of violence.

Temporal relations between Craven and Blade are also further confused by the sequence's use of diegetic sound effects. I have already noted the different sonic spaces that the sounds of Craven's footsteps and the horse's hooves seem to occupy, but of equal interest is the way in which these actions are separated on the soundtrack. By cross-cutting between shots of the hooves and Craven running, the sequence infers that they are taking place simultaneously, but little suspense can be created by the soundtrack when the sounds of both actions do *not* occur at the same time. The sound of Craven's footsteps could be mixed, for example, with hoof sounds of increasing volume in order to temporally align both actions and create a sense that the distance between the two characters is lessening. Despite this, it is not until shot (18) – significantly the first time in the sequence that an explicitly-cued point-of-view shot is used – that both the horse's hooves and Craven's footsteps can be heard together on

the soundtrack and their spatial and temporal relations established. This shot, in fact, is the fulcrum of the entire sequence, for it represents a distinct change in focus to the film's narrative script: having until that point exhibited a focus on delays, discontinuous shots and other excessive elements, the film suddenly adopts devices of continuity – point-of-view cueing between shots (17) and (18), (19) and (20); a reverse / shot coupling between shots (21) and (23) – in order to advance the narrative and conclude the scene.

One final problematic factor of this sequence is its apparent construction of *multiple* temporalities through the use of slow-motion cinematography, a device used extensively and often with equal ambivalence throughout the *filone's* numbers. To illustrate this I would like to lay stress on shots (5) and (8) of *Mannaja's* opening sequence which depict the horse's hooves in slow-motion. Taken on their own, there is nothing temporally illogical about their slow speed, but when they are paired with another two shots – (6) and (9), of Craven's feet – in *regular* time then a distinct rupture in the film's ordering of time is exposed. The placing of these disparate shots through parallel editing in a position that would normally signify their temporal alignment here creates an illogical – not to mention narratively incoherent – situation whereby Craven is running away at normal speed while his pursuer travels in slow-motion. As the sequence progresses it becomes clear that Blade and his horse are seen in slow-motion *in every single shot*, further confusing the relations between the two characters and again foregrounding its excessive elements. This temporal schism in fact reaches an almost absurd crescendo between shots (22) and (25) which depict Craven trying to “out-draw” Blade – and failing. In a regular speed close-up (shot 22) he draws the gun to a position where he could quite conceivably shoot Blade: this action is accompanied by the sequence's first overt use of rhythmic editing: narrative tension is created by the shot's half second-long duration. Instead of following with a similarly brief shot, however, the film then presents a slow-motion shot of *four* seconds in length (shot 23), during which time Blade draws his axe and hurls it at Craven. This pattern is continued by a slow-motion shot of the axe flying through the air (shot 24), again half a second long, and is offset by another half-second long medium shot (shot 25) – this time at normal speed and shown from a stylised and “impossible” low angle – of the axe severing Craven's arm. In all, it takes Craven one second of screen time to draw his weapon, compared to the five seconds that it takes

Blade to grab and throw his: by some bizarre manipulation of film logic, however, Craven never even has time to fire.

It is notable that such a temporal violation should take place within a film that is, ostensibly at least, a western, for in no other mainstream genre is the “quick draw” so inseparably bound to the moral and narrative framework of the films. When Shane eventually kills Wilson (Jack Palance) in the film’s climactic sequence, he does so because he is the hero, and the hero is always the faster draw. In *Mannaja*, however, Blade is by far the *slower* draw, and his “victory” over Craven thus undermines both realism and continuity in the sequence, particularly given that his eventual killing of Craven in a later scene is the result of a formally-established pistol duel where he yells “draw” and outdraws Craven in real time. That the film’s opening sequence should create an attraction from creating multiple temporalities in this way – with Blade’s movements being rendered excessive by slow-motion while Craven’s are more integrated with narrative “real-time” – is fascinating, and serves to illustrate the extent to which the conflict between narrative and excess scripts is foregrounded in these scenes.

5.3 To-Be-Looked-At-Ness and Gestures of Display in the *Filone*

Having illustrated the many spatial and temporal (dis)continuities resulting from *Mannaja* and *Shane*’s contrasting narrative / excess relationships, I would like to be more explicit and work towards a taxonomy of excessive devices that can be identified across the *filone*. Of particular use here are Mellencamp’s (1977) arguments introduced in Chapter Four for, drawing on Mulvey, she is equally explicit in delineating the ways in which the musical creates to-be-looked-at-ness in the frame. I have already analogised Mulvey’s emphasis on visual impact and exhibitionistic display with the “cinematic gesture of presenting for view, of displaying” fundamental to Gunning’s attractions (1993), but to clarify my own findings I would like to briefly highlight a central contrast between these two theories. While the display of Mulvey’s female bodies takes place firmly *within* the continuity editing and point-of-view system of the (specifically classical Hollywood) films she examines, the display of Gunning’s attractions goes further and – as the opening sequence from *Mannaja*

illustrates – specifically works *against* these continuities. This is precisely the reason *why* attractions “work”, for by usurping the filmic continuities surrounding them they address the viewer *directly* in a manner that is far more excessive to narrative continuity and motivation than the displays of the female body essential to Mulvey’s argument. *Mannaja*’s play with frustrated vision; its numerous metanarrative delays; its conflation of slow-motion with normal speed temporalities; its eventual delivery of the promise of spectacle laid out in its opening shots – all of these devices work to distance the viewer from narrative and explicitly address his or her desire to view the film’s excessive script. As Gunning notes:

Attractions foreground the role of the spectator. Cinematic attractions can be defined as formal devices within early film texts. However, they can only be thoroughly understood if these devices are conceived as addressing spectators in a specific manner. [...] The attraction directly addresses the spectator, acknowledging the viewer’s presence and seeking to quickly satisfy a curiosity.

(1993)

Camera Violence

In order to develop this idea of direct address further, I would like to begin my taxonomy of the “formal devices” that create attractions in the *filoni* by citing *camera violence* as the films’ most obvious and distinctive example of direct address. Chapter Two discussed the miscellanea of “violated” shots in the films examined: flamethrowers being fired at the camera; elephants trampling it; splinters penetrating it; zombies biting it and broken bottles lacerating it. There are also a number of scenes in the *filone* that do *not* include physical attacks like this, yet which exhibit a similar awareness of their viewers: the show that Angela and her dancing troupe put on in *Mannaja*, for instance, is marked not just by its inclusion of an audience in front of the stage but also its frequent attempts to directly solicit the viewer’s attention with shots of Angela and the other girls looking directly at the camera. This literal “looking at the screen” is rare in the *filone* (and in this particular sequence seems to represent a conscious intertextual reference to the musical), but it is illustrative nonetheless of a trend in the films where the camera is either violated or addressed directly. This is also the case in the “zombie attack” sequence from *Incubo sulla città contaminata* /

Nightmare City (Italy / Mexico / Spain, 1980) described in Chapter Two, which begins in a television studio where a number of dancers form patterns in front of the studio's television cameras. Accompanied by a disco soundtrack and a lack of diegetic sound, this dance sequence is perhaps the closest to an out-and-out musical number than any of the scenes from the films examined (the presence of diegetic cameras and cameramen as "onlookers" also aid this), but as the dance is interrupted by the zombies the type of "show" that *Incubo* is putting on changes course. I have already noted the distinctive attractions created by the slow-motion shots that ensue (zombies attacking the girls and the camera operators), but of more import here are the shots where victims fall directly into the camera and zombies both look directly at and attack the camera. Although these shots to a certain extent bring the viewer closer to the events depicted and thus serve a distinct suspense-heightening function, exactly *which* camera is being attacked at these points – the diegetic television camera or the camera itself – is itself unclear, and the discernibly self-conscious nature with which direct address shots are used in this sequence illustrates another "game" that films such as *Incubo* often involve their viewers in.

Central Framing / Reframing

Key to Gunning's notion of direct address is what he calls the "gesture of display" (1993) that transforms the content of a film's frame into a discrete attraction, and Mellencamp provides a number of examples of the ways in which such gestures are figured in the musical. The first two of these refer to the use of *central framings and reframings* of characters in song and dance sequences, and it is interesting to observe how important a theme this is both in *Mannaja* and throughout the numerous centrally-framed acts of violence referred to in Chapter Two. Craven's wild running, Blade's pursuit and the flight of his axe all take place at the centre of the frame and are therefore invested with more importance and predominance within it. In the musical, Mellencamp argues, this effect is further heightened by the frequent re-framing of these figures through camera movement and editing, and this pattern can also be traced throughout *Mannaja*'s opening sequence. Each one of the camera pans, tilts and tracks cited in Figure 5.2.2 works to locate the characters and objects not just at the centre of the frame but often at the same spatial depth and shot ratio, literally

“holding” them in close-up and reframing them in a manner that maximises their to-be-looked-at-ness: for example, shots (3), (5), (11) and (14) all track forwards or backwards to keep their contents (Craven; the hooves; and Blade) at a consistent distance from and size within the frame. This leads to a somewhat bewildering situation whereby characters in the *filone* are often robbed of movement; the uniformity of their position within the frame negating any real sense of spatial progress and, by extension, suspense. Editing patterns also create a similar effect in *Mannaja*’s opening sequence, staunchly refusing to let Craven, Blade, the hooves or the axe travel to the frame’s peripheries (where they would be divested of their visual “power”) by placing cuts at points occurring before this happens. As a final observation, the potential of centrally-framed shots to effect even more spatial discontinuity on the scene is also apparent, for centrally-framed characters bisect and balance the frame, implying a vagueness of off-screen space to the left and right of the image that can be contrasted with *Shane*’s coherent space, created by reverse shots, eyeline matches and two-shots.

Shot Ratio and Duration

I would like now to build on Mellencamp’s argument by suggesting that shot *ratio* and *duration* also work as gestures of display throughout the *filoni*. One of the most instantly striking aspects of *Mannaja*’s opening is that – as Figure 5.2.2 shows – it is largely shot in close-up and medium shot, with only eight of its twenty-seven shots in long shot. It is not just the content of the frame that is important here, though: where tighter shots in mainstream films like *Shane* are typically afforded less time than longer ones (by limiting what is shown in the frame via lens manipulation, close-ups necessarily draw attention to the filmic apparatus and threaten narrative stability) in *Mannaja* it is the close-up shots that in fact typically last the longest. Shots that have already been rendered excessive via the close-up are therefore typically intensified by also prolonging their duration, creating an overinvestment in the image that has recurrently emerged in the *filoni* that I have examined. The final shot of the sequence, an extreme close-up of Blade’s eyes, is held for a full ten seconds and is, as a result, almost wholly excessive. Although it provides the viewer with the first view of the film’s protagonist, the duration of this shot – coupled with the fact that the emphasis

on Blade's act of looking is *not* accompanied by any attempts to integrate him with a coherent point-of-view system – only further highlights the spectacle provided by such an exotic (by which I mean “unusual within mainstream cinema”) shot.

Se sei vivo spara relies heavily on protracted close-ups in its numbers. One of its central gun battles takes place within a darkened shop (darkness here also serving to obscure both the characters' and the viewer's vision) where Django stalks his adversary in a sequence mediated almost entirely in facial close-ups. The film, like *Solamente*, includes a nightmarish “flashback” number where disparate and strobe-like shots of Django's face are intercut with shots of a pair of hands being washed and the head of a corpse, all shown in tight close-up. Finally, in the film's most graphic number – referred to in Chapter Two – a Native American is scalped by a lynch mob: extreme close-ups of his face are alternated with close-ups of onlookers licking their lips and looking on with sadistic intent. In all cases, close-ups are used to fix characters and objects at the centre of the frame in order to exploit any to-be-looked-at-ness that they can provide (and, in the case of the onlookers' facial close-ups, highlight the to-be-looked-at-ness of *what they are looking at*): a technique that is by no means limited to the violent numbers themselves, as Chapter Four's examination of the devices used to mark the beginnings and endings of scenes revealed.

Camera Placement and Angle

Mellencamp's third device by which the musical denotes to-be-looked-at-ness is through what she terms “the elevated height of the performer” (1977, p.32), or the placing of the performer on a stage within the number. Few of the *filone*'s numbers (with the exception of the “dance sequences” described in *Mannaja* and *Incubo*) take place on explicit elevated “stages”, but upon considering the use of *camera placement and angle* as a means of elevating characters and objects its relevance becomes clearer. As Figure 5.2.2 illustrates, *Mannaja* frequently uses extreme high and low angles to further specularise the contents of the frame, with the recurring close-ups of hooves and feet and the climactic severing of Craven's arm in shot (25) providing the best examples of this. It is quite fitting that the sequence ends its game of spectatorship with its most stylised shot: while there is of course a narrative

requirement for this act to be depicted (Blade apprehends Craven to collect bounty on his head), the central satisfaction to be gleaned here arises from the combination of the diegetic violent act and the to-be-looked-at-ness that the film instils in it by combining such a stylised camera angle with central framing, slow-motion cinematography and the similarly stylised fleshy *thump* accompanying it on the soundtrack.

Presence of an Audience

The fourth and final of Mellencamp's codes concerns the recurrent presence of an *audience* within song and dance numbers in the musical: including onlookers in a scene, she suggests, adds further emphasis on the to-be-looked-at-ness of the events depicted. This is especially relevant to violent and spectacular scenes of the *filone*, a disproportionate number of which take place in front of a diegetic audience. The mere depiction of the countless shootings, tortures, beatings, mutilations and fistfights that punctuate the films is seemingly not enough: by presenting audiences who watch, express horror, laugh or look on sadistically, spectacle of these events can be further emphasised. Characters are always *looking* in the *filone*; an idea that is conveyed by the disproportionate use of facial close-ups across almost all of the films examined. Significantly, however, these shots are often rendered excessive by virtue of the fact that such "cues" are typically never aligned with point-of-view shots. The viewer remains resolutely "locked out" of narrative point-of-view system in the *filone*'s violent numbers: when character point-of-view shots are used they are typically uncued and only used so as to provide a particularly dramatic view of (or away from) the acts taking place.

Mannaja's "dance" sequence foregrounds this device quite effectively: both the dance and the stagecoach massacre scene with which it is cross-cut provide their own distinct audiences for the spectacular events depicted (facial close-ups of Debra's reaction to the massacre are presented). Perhaps most notably, the alignment of violence and spectacle that the film continually infers is made wholly explicit when the upbeat can-can music accompanying the dance eventually spans beyond the cross-cuts, creating an absurd situation where graphic shots of bullet wounds and shootings

are seemingly choreographed to a light-hearted musical score. That the film consciously foregrounds the blurring of spaces by visually “pairing” shots of red pom-pom garters with bloody bullet wounds (both presented excessively by central framings and close-ups) only further highlights this absurdity. Within a film where narrative space was more coherent, such cross-cuts would suggest that violence in this sequence is eroticised and was integrated within themes of gender within the plot. In *Mannaja*, however, pom-poms, gartered legs, pistols and bullet wounds are divested of any importance outside their to-be-looked-at-ness, a factor which highlights the limitations of Mulvey’s gender theory when applied to the *filone*.

The Violent Apparatus

If, as Sconce notes, the central project of the mainstream genre film is “to erase or at least obscure all marks of its enunciation” (1993, p.107), then a sixth and final gesture of display that can be traced across *Mannaja* is the *revelation* of the film’s “material identity” through the use of shots and soundtrack elements which draw attention to their own constructedness. Taking the shots of Blade and his horse’s hooves – shots (5), (8), (14), (20), (23) and (28) – as a central example: the fact that these shots come from “nowhere”, are mostly close-ups, use low angles, are typically shrouded in fog and are initially graphically unlinked to the shots of Craven with which they are intercut creates a discernible level of excess across them, but there is nothing extremely powerful, exotic or spectacular about their content. The fact that the excesses of these shots are then *intensified* by slow-motion creates an overinvestment in the image, but also of note is the visual pleasure provided by slow-motion itself and the violence that the film inflicts on its continuities by manipulating the apparatus in this manner. The interaction of these images with similarly violent and discontinuous sound effects (loud, artificial hoof sounds with unrealistic echoes) also further underlines this process: shots and sounds of hooves and splashes may be fairly unremarkable in real life, but when they are amplified and increasingly stylised in this manner, a distinct attraction arises from the violation of visual and aural continuities and subsequent revelation of the film’s mechanisms. The key distinction to be made here is that, when devices like this are used, they often lay just as much emphasis on

the immediate and abstracted to-be-looked-at-ness of the *form* of the film itself as that of the diegetic elements presented.

The crash zoom is another common example used to figure violence in the apparatus itself, and is frequently combined with the close-up to create a distinct attraction. Horror *filone* *L'aldila / The Beyond* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1981) includes a protracted scene where a crazed dog savages the throat of one of the main characters. The film repeatedly cuts between a centrally framed close-up of the woman's face with the dog biting her neck and an extreme close-up of the dog's teeth sinking into her flesh, accompanied throughout by loud screams and very loud tearing and barking sounds. As the dog pulls back to reveal a gaping wound in her neck, the film continues to cut between these shots before cutting to *two* consecutive zooms from different positions into the injury, quickly followed by a crash zoom out that reveals her screaming face in close-up. Three discernible elements – the centrally-framed special effect of her savaged neck, the self-conscious manipulation of the film lens and the heavily stylised, sonically excessive tearing sounds – thus work together to create an attraction, a pattern repeated in abundance throughout the *filone's* violent scenes and also extending beyond zooms to the violent focus pulls, zip pans and tilts that are widespread in the films.

Equally remarkable are the rhythms created by *editing* in sequences like this, which often create a violence in the image by cutting quickly between discontinuous shots or manipulating tempo for effect. Again, the manipulation of tempo is also a feature of the mainstream film: later on in *Shane's* sequence, for example, Shane flinches and draws his gun when he hears Joey cocking a toy rifle. The shots on either side of this event are notably lengthy in comparison to the brief shots that show him flinching and drawing, creating a “jagged” editing effect that draws attention to the narrative importance of the action (it creates the idea that Shane has a violent past and has had to draw his gun on more than one occasion). Such manipulations of tempo are often used to far more excessive effect in the *filone*, however; a key example of this being the point where Craven's limb is severed. Shot (23) of Blade throwing the axe is five seconds long; the subsequent shots of the axe flying (shot 24) and the impact of the axe (shot 25) are only half a second long each, and the shot that follows is six seconds long, the attraction in this case being created not only by the gestures of display

described but also by an excessive manipulation of editing rhythm. Blade's mutilation of Craven is the spectacular zenith of this sequence, the final delivery of the film's "promise", and the excessive nature of the shots presented is further foregrounded by the fact that they are bracketed by far longer shots and stand out completely from the sequence's editing rhythms. Moreover, the quick change in speed from slow-motion to normal speed between shots (25) and (26) again creates a situation that is – in narrative terms at least – wholly illogical, for the axe suddenly "speeds up" to chop Craven's arm off. Having shown this action and heightened it through such jagged editing, the film then even further elongates the violence presented by cutting to *another* excessive shot (shot 26), this time a slow-motion facial close-up of Craven's face that dwells on his suffering for six seconds.

A great deal of the exoticism of these attractions, in fact, seems to arise from their incongruousness with the conventional character-dependent point-of-view shots that mainstream films have popularised: as a result, one of the central spectatorial pleasures provided by the *filoni* appears to be the effective *liberation* from this system that their numbers often promote. I referred earlier to the exoticism provided by the extreme close-up of Blade's eyes (27); what is "exotic" about the *filone's* recurrent extreme ocular close-ups is the fact that they are so extreme as to exclude any other facial characteristics from the frame, in the process making it difficult to read the emotions of the character. Whereas the facial close-up is a central device used by mainstream narration to present a character's emotional reaction to unfolding events and thus align the viewer with the pleasure of identification, these ocular close-ups do not possess such significance for the narrative script. It is here that one of the *filone's* central paradoxes emerges, for the films habitually show people looking in close-up yet rarely grant the viewer access to what the characters are looking at from *their point-of-view*. The key function of such shots, it seems, is not to integrate viewer and narrative point-of-view, but instead to simply reassert the to-be-looked-at-ness of the acts that they and the viewer are witnessing.

5.4 Conclusion

Although the excessive and violent elements of *Mannaja*'s opening are just as common in the other westerns, *gialli*, *pepla* and *poliziotteschi* examined, some remarkable analogies can be drawn between the way in which the sequence unfolds and the way in which the narrative structures of the *filoni* typically unfold. Both are characterised by excesses that effect and lack of causal relations and motivation between their constituent parts; both present disequilibria that are habitually rectified by violence; both foreground the tension between the focus on narrative and excess (particularly in *Mannaja* when shot (18) introduces continuity editing for the first time) and, markedly, both conclude with violent attractions to formally mark their endings. Three more specific central conclusions can be drawn from my comparison of the *Shane* and *Mannaja*, and all are intrinsically linked with the visual pleasures that the *filone* characteristically offers its viewer. Firstly, the levels of hybridity engendered in the films by the industrial conditions described in Chapter One typically extend to the numbers themselves, where cinematic excess creates hybridities of *space and time* weakening geographical relationships between characters, undermining motivation and causality between shots, working against a sense of trajectory and, most importantly, deprioritising conventional narrative pleasures of suspense and character identification. The central pleasures offered to the viewer of *Shane* are predominantly narrative-based, and only “work” as a result of the sequence’s highly-economic regulation of excess between its shots. The pleasures of watching a story begin, of identifying a geographical, historical and thematic *milieu*, of being introduced to the main characters and introduced into a coherent character-based point-of-view system, of being prompted with hermeneutic questions (“is Joey going to shoot the deer?” “Why does Shane react to the sound of a gun being cocked?”), not to mention of being provided with a clearly discernible space – all contribute to the viewer’s active involvement in *Shane*’s narrative.

Few of these pleasures apply to *Mannaja*’s opening, “expository” sequence. The sequence is given no geographical or historical context: its characters wear hybrid costumes and its synthesiser soundtrack points towards an entirely different era. There is no sense of either who Craven and Blade are, nor *where* they are in relation to one another or what the significance of their actions is. In addition, the sequence’s almost

complete lack of a character-based point-of-view system distances the viewer even further from the narrative events portrayed. This is not to say that narrative pleasures simply do not exist here: the ominous nature of the setting, its soundtrack and the mysterious fog all establish an uneasy tone that is maintained throughout. Nevertheless, the unease of the narrative is overpowered by the unease created by the excessive elements of the sequence that primarily make the viewer “uneasy” about the coherence of the narrative script itself.

Building on this, a second conclusion to be drawn is that the central “suspense” arising as a result of this incoherence is generated by the *excess* – rather than the narrative – script foregrounded in the *filone*’s numbers. To paraphrase a similar claim made in the previous chapter, the central question on which the viewer’s pleasure rests is *not* the narrative “what is going to be shown next in the sequence?” but rather “*when* is the scene going to show an attraction?”. This process is reliant on the acts of display that not only create attractions but also, centrally, act as bracketing mechanisms signalling to the viewer that something spectacular is going to happen. The opening shots of *Mannaja*’s sequence explicitly convey the *promise* of spectacle and arouse curiosity through a number of these mechanisms: the absence of dialogue; the stylised nature of the sound effects; the excessive angles, ratios and camera movements used and, above all, the sequence’s musical accompaniment. Having made this promise, however, the sequence then *delays* its delivery, obscuring the viewer’s view of proceedings and drawing the scene out with relatively “minor” attractions (created by slow-motion shots; exaggerated angles) leading up to the climactic act of spectacular violence that brings the number to a close. As Gunning notes of early cinema’s attractions:

Rather than a desire for an (almost) endlessly delayed fulfilment and a cognitive involvement in pursuing an enigma, early cinema [...] attracts in a different manner. It arouses a curiosity that is satisfied by surprise rather than narrative suspense.

(1993)

This more “abstracted” type of suspense, created by the *filone*’s cinematic gestures of presentation, directly addresses a desire in the viewer to be *shown* spectacles and in the process leads to a third conclusion; namely that during scenes of violence the *filone* characteristically instigates games of spectatorship with these viewer

expectations. There are three distinct ways in which violent (and often spectacular) diegetic events are displayed by the *filone*: the first and least playful of these occurs when an action is shown (“an elephant tramples a prisoner”) and its to-be-looked-at-ness is emphasised by the gestures of display discussed previously (low angles; camera violence; central framing; onlookers). In this instance, the film is simply presenting its viewer with a discrete attraction, without any further manipulation.

A second type involves a distinct *frustrated* look that commonly takes the form of either the *look away from* violence or through camera violence itself. Both purposely obscure the viewer’s view of the violent act and its impact on the victim: the elephant trampling in *La vendetta di Ercole / Goliath and the Dragon* (Italy / France, Vittorio Cottafavi, 1960), for example, blocks the viewer’s view of violence by placing him / her at the point of *impact*, facing the perpetrator rather than the victim.

Fundamentally, both also confound the viewer’s expectation (of seeing a violent act rendered as an attraction) by *substituting* a shot created by the violence of the *apparatus* in its place. In films like *La vendetta di Ercole*, this substitutive move in fact often renders the violence of an act *more* intense than it could have been if it was explicitly shown in the first place, for there is an implicit suggestion in these shots that the acts of violence depicted are so gruesome that even *the film itself* has to look away. A notable exception, again, is *Zombi 2*, for it is hard to say which aspect of its eye mutilation is more powerful: the shots of Menard’s eye being skewered in close-up, or the film’s playful attempts to obscure this act by not merely obscuring but *attacking* the camera.

The final and most overtly “playful” of these games spans across entire sequences and involves the film actively signalling that a violent or otherwise spectacular act is going to occur (via the bracketing mechanisms discussed)⁸¹ before purposely *delaying* and *postponing* its arrival. Where delays in a sequence’s narrative trajectory are often used in the mainstream film to heighten suspense and build tension, within the excess script of the film delays instead heighten *curiosity* of when violence will take place. The viewer cannot “read” the images presented to establish when this will happen in

⁸¹ Notably, Gunning also suggests that “framing gestures” are fundamental to the suspense created by attractions (1993).

Mannaja: the confused nature of its spatial geography conveys little sense of the two characters getting any closer. Having delayed the viewer for one minute and forty-eight seconds via a series of often meandering and excessive shots, when *Mannaja* finally deploys its violent act and associated attractions this presents the viewer with a surprise “shock”, a spectacular payoff that satisfies the viewer’s curiosity and recalls Gunning’s suggestion – fundamental to the arguments of this chapter – that:

Attractions’ fundamental hold on spectators depends on arousing and satisfying visual curiosity through a direct and acknowledged act of display, rather than following a narrative enigma within a diegetic site into which the spectator peers invisibly.

(1993)

Chapter Six

“Sonic Spectacle” and Mismatching

6.1 Introduction

Music serves to ward off the pleasure of uncertain signification. The particular kind of music used in dominant feature films has connotative values so strongly codified that it can bear a similar relation to the images as a caption to a news photograph. It interprets the image, pinpoints and channels the ‘correct’ meaning of the narrative events depicted.

(Gorbman 2003, p.40)

The idea of “uncertain signification” as a factor that constantly threatens the coherence of mainstream cinema’s narration provides a very useful analogy with my own arguments. Although Gorbman does not explicitly refer to the threat of *excess* in her study of music in mainstream films, her emphasis on superfluous meaning that needs to be “warded off” by their narratives – not to mention her acknowledgment of the *pleasures* that such meaning creates – in fact reflects my own approach to the *filone* and its structure. One central question fundamental to the work of this chapter arises: if, as Gorbman notes, music in the mainstream film offers a central means by which excesses can be *regulated* to create narrative pleasure, then what happens in the soundtrack of the *filoni*, where such excesses are frequently unfettered by the narratives underpinning them?

Two central aims therefore influence the structure of this chapter, my first being to investigate and identify the various modes of interaction between image and sound occurring across both the *filone*’s narrative scenes and its numbers. Where Chapter Five illustrated the ways in which spatial and temporal relationships were frequently frustrated by the *filone*’s images and editing patterns to create attractions, this chapter shall illustrate how similar frustrations are created by excessive elements of the films’ *soundtracks*. Secondly, I wish to investigate the idea that the use of these elements can create “sonic spectacles” that can work, like the codes of to-be-looked-at-ness described, to not only intensify the violent acts presented on screen but also *create violence on the soundtrack itself*. Significantly, the numerous examples of the *filone*’s spectatorial game of looking away from violence are habitually accompanied by

excesses of sound – be they squelches; thumps; tearing sounds or loud musical motifs – which emphasise the violence presented. By introducing and drawing on prevailing critical discourses on sound in cinema I intend to investigate exactly what processes are at work in interactions like this, as well as to answer the question of how such scenes position and provide pleasure to the viewer.

To maintain the clarity of the arguments presented, this chapter is structured around five key types of interaction occurring between sound and image in the *filone*; I will use the close analysis of science-fiction *filone* *2019: Dopo la caduta di New York / 2019: After the Fall of New York* (Italy / France, Sergio Martino, 1983) to illustrate these points while drawing them with reference to other *filoni*. Formulating my own terms for these five distinctive interactions, I shall begin by discussing the most “mainstream” of them: *supportive* interaction, which occurs predominantly in the *filone*’s narrative and dialogue scenes, and fulfils a similar purpose to the mainstream film’s use of sound to create spatial and temporal continuity.

I then wish to start considering the many *mismatches* between sound and image that occur in these films, suggesting that a common type of interaction in the *filone* is *divergent*; occurring when sound and image convey two different meanings. The fact that the *filoni* relied exclusively on post-dubbing and foley techniques to create their soundtracks suggests that this type of interaction is inherent in the films: these soundtracks are fundamentally excessive by virtue of their dislocation from the original filmed and edited images that they accompany. Moving on from this, I shall examine the various points in the *filone* where soundtrack – and typically music – works as a backdrop to draw the spectator’s attention to the to-be-looked-at-ness of the image, labelling this type of interaction *directive* in nature. By referring to numbers from the films this section shall illustrate how the tunes that accompany these scenes are characterised by their lack of urgency, fixed time signatures and inability to change in response to the specific images presented.

A more extreme type of interaction occurring in the *filoni* will then be identified as *mutual interaction*, occurring when a visual attraction is accompanied by a simultaneous *sonic spectacle* in order to maximise the impact effect of depicting a (typically violent) act. I would also like to introduce the idea at this stage that the

heavily-stylised nature of the *filone*'s sound effects and the overinvestment that the *filone* often places in them create a “*to-be-listened-to-ness*” that helps account for the sonic spectacles provided. I then intend to illustrate a fifth and final mode of interaction that relies almost solely upon sonic spectacle, discussing the frequent points in the *filone* where its games of spectatorship present a look away or obscured look during scenes of violence, emphasising the impact of the (unseen) act through representing it *on the soundtrack alone*. I shall label this type of interaction *substitutive* in nature, and by concluding this final analysis chapter with such an investigation of “violent sound” I shall provide a fitting final component to the arguments presented across my thesis.

6.2 Supportive Sound and the Mainstream Film

Film music analysts have seemed drawn, for the most part, to interactions where the soundtrack and the moving image appear somehow to move to compatible rhythms. Whether these writers find their niche in the realms of industrial synergy or “suitable” orchestral scoring, their theoretical touchstones have usually been hewn out of a belief in the superiority of moments of uncomplicated *union* between music, visual imagery and narrative agenda.

(Dickinson 2007)

As the meta-analytic work of Dickinson and others⁸² suggests, accounts of music⁸³ in film have traditionally been preoccupied with moments of *interaction*; where, as she notes, “the soundtrack and the moving image appear somehow to move to compatible rhythms” (2004, p.1). Furthermore, the type of interaction primarily discussed by such accounts has been what I shall call a *supportive* one, where a film’s audio track works to *reinforce* meanings conveyed primarily by its visuals. Paraphrasing early 20th century film composer Leonid Sabaneev, Davison recalls a prevailing approach to composition using a “piano” analogy that delineates film music as the “left hand” to the “right hand” of the film’s visuals; “supporting them but never contradicting them or drawing attention to itself” (2004, p.21), and goes on to suggest that most

⁸² For example, Donnelly (2001) provides a useful summary of prevailing critical approaches to music in film.

⁸³ Studies focusing specifically on film *music* far outnumber those on film *sound*, and the bulk of work that this chapter draws on consequently comes from music debates.

“classical” scoring practices are quite explicitly based on the same principles as classical cinema (2004, p.29). The question of how such theories can be applied to the *filoni* – whose excessive structures are by no means “classical” – is central to the scope of this chapter, but before going on to explore this I wish to again take a paracinematic approach to the films by presenting a model of *mainstream* sound against which the characteristics of the *filone* can be contrasted.

Just as the formal visual devices of continuity editing work to create a coherent narrative space in film, Davison argues, so too does mainstream scoring, which sets itself the central aim of “heightening the fictive reality of a film’s narrative” by “[controlling] narrative connotation” (2004, p.2). Dramatic events in a film’s narrative are thus given both greater clarity and greater weight by the inclusion of music, which has the potential to support and highlight aspects of the visual track. Examples of this type of interaction can be found throughout the opening sequence of *Shane* (USA, George Stevens, 1952), with the narrative information presented by the film’s mise-en-scène and editing almost constantly being reflected and concretised by aspects of the soundtrack. The film’s opening shots present a space that is quickly delineated as the American West between 1866 and 1914: this meaning is supported by the distinct harmonica-led American frontier ballad that accompanies the shots. Shane’s centrality within the frame when he first arrives connotes his importance: this is mirrored by a centrality within the film’s sonic hierarchy, for when Joey first sees him (in long shot) the neighing of his horse can be heard loudly and is similarly “centred” within the soundtrack. Finally, when Riker and his men arrive to threaten Starrett at the end of the sequence, the menace connoted by Riker’s threatening body language, his weapon and his gang of roughnecks is matched by the introduction of an equally menacing descending orchestral motif in Victor Young’s score.

While the mainstream film’s soundtrack works to support meanings conveyed by its visuals, at the same time its basic function of smoothing over the joins between shots and scenes continues *unnoticed* by the viewer, suggesting that of equal importance to its provision of commentary is the soundtrack’s task of creating coherent spatial and temporal relations by *concealing the workings of the apparatus*. Both processes work hand-in-hand, as Davison suggests:

As signifier of emotion and provider of narrative cues, classical scoring aids the spectator's subsumption into the narrative, once again diverting attention away from the film as technologically created product, albeit indirectly by redirecting attention towards the diegetic world of the film [...] Just as the camera must be hidden from view in order to conceal the film's nature as 'product', so too must the sound recording equipment.

(2004, p.29)

Fusing these arguments with some of the ideas central to my thesis, mainstream sound can therefore be characterised by its attempts to *minimise excess* in the text, creating the "clear, seamless space" (Thompson 1986, p.138) essential to narrative stability. In fact, a notable aspect of Thompson's argument is her insistence that sound can have its *own* excessive features as well, suggesting that "music has a great potential to call attention to its own formal qualities apart from its immediate function in relation to the image track." (p.139). I would like to label this most mainstream (and, unsurprisingly, most critically-examined) mode of interaction as being *supportive* in nature: soundtrack within this mode works to support narrative meaning, provide spatial and temporal continuity, reflect the viewer's attention to the narrative and minimise excess. These characteristics are of course widespread throughout both mainstream cinema and the *filone*, for by its very nature the supportive relationship between sound and image is fundamental to the coherence required of narrative cinema.⁸⁴ Having asserted this, I would like to now turn my attention from the dominant body of critical work in this area and consider the *alternative* modes of interaction where film sound – and its potential for excess – is fettered far less strongly to narrative continuity.

6.3 Mismatched Sound in the *Filone*

Examining some of the work that has been done *outside* this conventional approach to film sound – commonly known as "synchronisation theory"⁸⁵ – provides a number of useful perspectives from which non-mainstream films like the *filone* can be examined: as James Buhler notes, synchronisation theory "is simply one possible solution to the

⁸⁴ As I argued earlier, despite presenting its central pleasures as attractions the *filone* is nonetheless a clear example of narrative cinema.

⁸⁵ As Donnelly notes, "What is called the 'synchronisation' theory of film music holds that even such non-diegetic music should, as Max Steiner put it, [fit] a picture like a glove" (2001, p.45).

relationship of image and sound and arguably the least interesting” (2001, p.45). One alternative presented is the *counterpoint* theory proposed by the work of Adorno and Eisler (1944) as well as the dialectical work of Eisenstein (1931), literature which takes as its starting point the irreconcilable *clashes* between image and sound – two radically different systems⁸⁶ – that occur in many films. Such clashes, labelled as “mismatches” by Dickinson, are more common in films existing outside the perceived canon of “quality” cinema:

Littering the path to perfection and expunged from our canons and “best of” lists are numerous examples where music and cinema misunderstand or embarrass each other, seem utterly clueless about each other’s intentions, with one insensitively trampling upon the messages the other has so meticulously tried to articulate.

(2007)

These mismatches, Dickinson notes, have the capacity to create an *ambivalence* of meaning similar to Gorbman’s “uncertain signification” that can often be deeply unsettling for the viewer. Whereas a film is generally thought to excel, Dickinson argues, “when all its elements are working towards a regulated (though often updated) sense of cohesion”, when it *fails* to achieve this through the unification of image and sound an “acute discomfort” is effected (2004, p.35). Such moments appear to be diametrically opposed to the typical points in a film where sound has a supportive relationship to image, and the idea that combinations of sound and image can actually work *against* narrative cohesion, reveal a film’s excessive script and have a negative impact on the viewer provides a useful entry-point to the study of the *filone* which, as Dickinson notes of the Italian horror cycle, is often characterised by its sonic ambivalence (2004, p.1). With this in mind I would like to pursue the idea that the visual pleasures offered and frequent violence created by discontinuity and excess in the *filone* can be transposed to its audio track.

A central aspect of the *filone* in which Dickinson’s arguments immediately find resonance is through the Italian film industry’s unwavering reliance on *post-production sound* to accompany the visuals of its films. Quite remarkably, it was only in the late 1980s that Italian directors began to use location sound on a widespread

⁸⁶ Dickinson: “What often gets left by the wayside in traditional soundtrack analysis is the fact that music and film are communication systems obeying grammars, syntaxes and vocabularies which are often completely alien to one another” (2004, p.3).

scale, having until then relied on a production system where all aspects of a film's sound – dialogue, sound effects and music – were added after scenes had been shot and edited.⁸⁷ There seem to have been a number of reasons for this reliance on post-production sound, the most obvious being the budgetary constraints faced by the *filone* producers within such a fiercely competitive economic climate. By foregoing location sound recording, film companies could save money on equipment and studio hire, reduce the number of takes required to obtain shots and maximise the turnover of *filoni* that they produced. Films would be sent to post-dubbing facilities where foley sounds would be added (commonly from low-cost stock libraries), music would be grafted on and actors would dub their lines or, just as commonly, have their lines dubbed by a voice actor who had a more appropriate voice for the role. As Matthews notes, a number of actors like Emilio Cigoli and Alberto Sordi supplemented their acting careers by dubbing the lines of both foreign *and* Italian actors (the two actors were, respectively, the Italian voices of John Wayne and Oliver Hardy). Even the voices of Italian screen divas like Sophia Loren were deemed inappropriate by producers, often being replaced by the more “suitable” tones of voiceover artists (Matthews 2006).

Another central explanation for the widespread nature of post-production sound recording is rooted firmly in the debates of Italian national cinema and identity discussed by Dalle Vacche and cited by Chapter One: when the first “talkies” emerged in the late 1920s, Italy – a country that had only officially been unified ten years before – was still divided by a number of contrasting dialects across the peninsula. In light of this *questione della lingua* (chronic absence of a literary language) the Italian authorities rapidly realised that film dubbing would provide an ideal medium for disseminating a single standard language to a public divided linguistically yet united by a love of the cinema (Dalle Vacche 1992, p.5). As well as offering this benefit, post-dubbing was also essential given the predominance of European co-productions and widespread use of foreign actors as leading men and women in the *filoni*: with very few of these actors fluent in Italian, they would speak their lines on set in their native tongues, creating a situation where it was not unusual for more than three different languages to be spoken on camera. This reliance on

⁸⁷ Matthews (2006).

dubbing also led to the establishment of *typeage* as a widespread practice in the Italian film industry: with directors free to choose a voice for their characters, actors and actresses were chosen less for their acting abilities and vocal talent than their appearance and ability to look good in front of a camera.

Taking these industrial factors into account, soundtrack in the *filone* seems to work with the idea of the mismatch at its very core: immediately apparent when viewing and listening to any of the films is the uncomfortable relationship between their dubbed dialogue and the movement of the actors' mouths on screen, as well as the ensuing lack of sonic depth that this effects. Characters' voices in the *filoni* are almost always asynchronous to the movement of their lips (even in instances where Italian actors are speaking in Italian-language versions of the films), and in contrast with foley sound effects – which frequently change in volume based on their proximity to the screen – in the speech typically remains at a steady volume throughout. It is unsurprising that dialogue scenes in the *filone* are typically filmed in medium shot, close-up and reverse shot, for it is at this distance where the characters' words sound most natural, illustrating Erdoğan's argument that:

Dubbing makes the best picture visually flat and dramatically out of sync: it destroys the flow on which coherence of the illusionist spectacle is built.

(2006, p.259)

This idea of dubbed speech creating a fundamental sonic mismatch with the image's spatial continuities is also forwarded by Brophy: although his arguments refer to American exploitation films, they can be easily extended to the study of Italian production values:

The post-dubbing process is invariably rushed, and employs amazingly emotionless and unconvincing voice-actors. [...] These factors contribute to an awkward alienation effect wherein the on-screen being achieves and projects a disembodied state. Visually, he/she inhabits a mobile screen space – within the frame, across edits – but acoustically remains fixed, boxed in a sonic realm devoid of the subtle phrasing which accompanies location microphone movement.

(1999b, pp.51-52)

While the *filone*'s often "bad" dubbing often foregrounds its fundamental sonic mismatch, a number of formal devices work to salve the inevitable ambivalence that it presents. The aforementioned use of foley sounds of differing volume helps create cohesion behind the speech track, but also important is the reliance on supportive interaction through ambient noise and music, as well as the use of off-screen sound to solidify the spatial relations that the dubbing track's one-dimensionality works against. Besides, to argue against the effectiveness of dubbing in the Italian context highlights one of the central shortcomings of many Anglo-American approaches to the *filone*, namely the fact that critics frequently fail to consider how these films were received by *Italian* audiences who, until fairly recently, had never known anything *but* this type of sound design and regarded it as perfectly acceptable. As Erdoğan notes of dubbing in popular Turkish cinema:

The criticism levelled against dubbing overlooks the fact that audio practices are socially constructed and their terms can be challenged by the same values they have adopted. [...] Sound can be designed, produced and thus 'heard' only in reference to, and within the confines of, the apparatus.

(2006, pp.256-257)

Moving forward, two key questions arise: if the *filone*'s ubiquitous reliance on post-production sound creates a mismatch between audio and image tracks from the outset, then exactly what *types* of mismatch are there, and how can their effect on both the narrative and the viewer of the *filone* be compared with that of the supportive relationship discussed? To address these concerns, it is now my intention to bring the films themselves into my discussion, using the analysis of sound and its relation to image in *2019* as a foundation for the more general arguments that I intend to make.

6.4 Sound / Image Interaction in 2019: *Dopo la caduta di New York*

A characteristically opportunistic attempt to capitalise on the global successes of post-apocalyptic action films such as *Mad Max* (Australia, George Miller, 1979) and *Escape from New York* (USA, John Carpenter, 1981) and science-fiction films like *Alien* (UK / USA, Ridley Scott, 1979), *2019* borrows liberally from its antecedents.

With a magpie's eye for the visual accoutrements of the mainstream post-apocalyptic genre film, director Martino combines *Escape*'s long-haired anti-hero Snake Plissken and *Mad Max*'s eponymous biker in the character of Parsifal (played by American B-actor Michael Sopkiw); a rugged drifter who is tasked with finding and rescuing the last fertile woman left on a ruined and post-holocaustic Earth. This uncomplicated plot allows *2019* to lay emphasis on its excessive script throughout, and a number of scenes of spectacle predominate, ranging from a motor car battle in the Nevada desert and a subterranean laser battle to the numerous punch-ups, torture scenes, shootouts and chases that can be found in all of the cycles. Unsurprisingly, the focus throughout these scenes is on the excess script of the film; of particular interest in *2019* is the way in which this focus is reflected in its varying sound / image relationships, as Figure 6.4.1, on the follow page, illustrates:

Figure 6.4.1 Extract from Opening Sequence of *2019 - Dopo la caduta di New York* (0'0"- 3'48'')

| | |
|---|---|
|  |  |
| <p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p>LS, 36'' New York Skyline shrouded in mist; trumpeter walks into frame from behind camera <i>Sound of wind whooshing; a synthesised blues-scale trumpet riff fades in slowly before the trumpeter appears</i></p> | <p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <p>MS, 2'' Trumpeter stops playing; lowers trumpet from his lips <i>Wind whooshing; riff continues but fades out towards the end of shot</i></p> |
|  |  |
| <p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>LS Track, 30'' Camera tracks right across ruined cityscape; titles appear; a small spacecraft appears to the right of the frame <i>Wind whooshing: high register and eerie synth tune begins with synth strings playing motif in the same key as the trumpet riff (B major); engine noise fades in before spacecraft appears and increases in volume</i></p> | <p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p>MS, 3'' Similar to shot (2): Trumpeter still looking across at New York <i>Wind whooshing; synth score continues; engine noise continues</i></p> |



5

MS Track, 7" Camera tracks right to follow spacecraft as it flies behind a ruined skyscraper
Wind whooshing; synth score; engine noise increases in volume



6

LS, 7" Spacecraft flies towards camera; disappears over the top of the frame
Wind whooshing; synth score; engine noise a lot quieter than in shot (5) but increases in volume as spacecraft approaches camera



7

LS Track, 14" Camera tracks right across city while spacecraft flies left
Wind whooshing; synth score; spacecraft not so loud now



8

MS Track, 3" Trumpeter raises trumpet to lips, begins to play then camera follows him as he moves to the right
Wind whoosh stops; synth score continues; synth trumpet riff returns



9

LS Track, 9" Camera tracks left around Statue of Liberty
Synth score; trumpet riff continues



10

LS, 7" Trumpeter continues to play while walking off to the left
Synth score; trumpet riff fades slightly



11

LS Track, 13” Camera tracks left across the city
Synth tune and trumpet riff at much lower volume; voiceover begins (male, American-accented)

“Since the nuclear holocaust, 20 years have passed. The leader of the Eurak monarchy – the powerful Euro-Afro-Asian unity who pressed the fatal button – claims to have won the conflict”



12

LS Track / Tilt, 17” Camera tracks to the right across industrial buildings then tilts up to reveal funnel of power station

Synth tune continues, although it is now further back in the mix and is a chordal drone with no lead motif; voiceover continues

“But Planet Earth has been reduced to a garbage-strewn radioactive desert, inhabited by humans devoid of all hope for a future. Radiation could not have been worse: a few deformed creatures developed in the immediate post-war period...”

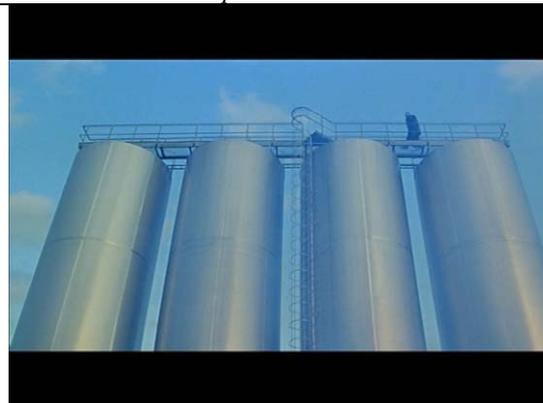


13

LS Pan / Tilt, 14” Camera pans right and tilts up to focus on a group of guards who are walking past; they walk off the frame and are followed by a group of guards on horseback

Synth tune continues, but with a military beat and more dynamics; sound of marching boots as guards walk past, then sound of hooves as horses ride by; voiceover continues

“...then...nothing. For nearly 15 years now, not one human child has been born” (pause until end of shot)



14

LS, 3” LA shot of industrial containers with patrolling guard walking to the left across them

Synth tune with military synth snare beat continues; sound of hooves and boots

**15**

CU Track / Pan / Tilt, 8" Camera tracks and pans right and back to follow horses hooves then tilts up whilst moving to focus on the faces of the mounted guards

Synth tune disappears; louder hoof sounds; voiceover continues:

"New York city, a huge pile of waste and rubble, is under the control of a Eurak military force."

**16**

LS, 5" Mounted guards travel right through a gate into a ghetto area

Hoof sounds and neighing of horses; voiceover continues:

"With the help of mercenary hunters the Euraks are, with deadly..."

**17**

MS Track, 5" Mounted guards ride towards the camera as it tracks back

Hoof sounds; voiceover continues:

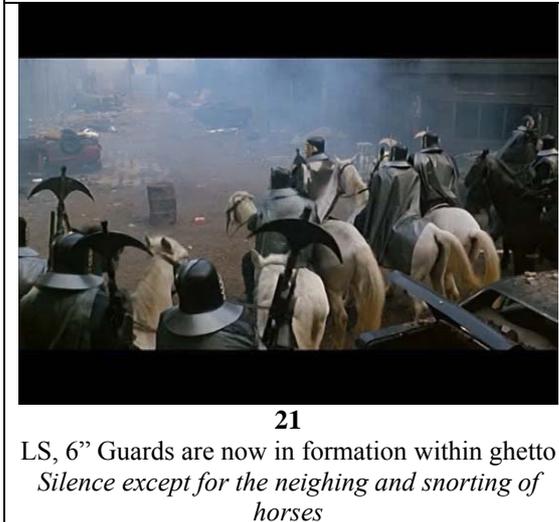
"...efficiency, steadily exterminating the locals and using the healthy ones for every..."

**18**

LS Zoom, 5" Guards ride into centre of ghetto from left to right, camera zooms slightly towards end of shot

Hoof sounds; voiceover continues:

"...conceivable kind of genetic experiment, in a desperate attempt to find the..."

| | |
|---|--|
|  |  |
| <p style="text-align: center;">19</p> <p>LS, 2" Longer shot shows guards continuing to assemble <i>Hoof sounds; voiceover continues:</i> "...key to survival to the continuance..."</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">20</p> <p>MS Pan, 4" Camera pans right slightly to show guards assembling <i>Hoof sounds; voiceover continues:</i> "...of the human race"</p> |
|  | |
| <p style="text-align: center;">21</p> <p>LS, 6" Guards are now in formation within ghetto <i>Silence except for the neighing and snorting of horses</i></p> | |

Before going on to examine the mismatches that emerge in *2019*, I would like firstly to lay emphasis on the *continuities* in sound that help accentuate the narrative focus of the sequence, which frequently exhibits a supportive relationship between its sound and image tracks. Visually, shots (1)-(4) establish a space (the mist-shrouded ruins of Manhattan), introduce a character (the trumpeter) and through reverse-shot formally establish his spatial relation to this space (he is looking at Manhattan from across the Hudson river). In addition, the film quickly establishes *sonic* continuities of space that run alongside those created by its images: the sound of whooshing wind, running from shots (1)-(7), helps not only to smooth over the joins between edits but also to establish an open-air acoustic space for the events portrayed, adding to the feelings of eeriness created by the images of a derelict New York (a city normally represented in terms of its vibrancy).

2019 also takes care to align the spatial locations of the elements within the frame with their corresponding sounds on the soundtrack: although I shall go on to problematise this, initially there is a clear link established between the sound of the trumpet heard at the start of shot (1) and the trumpeter who walks into the frame. When he takes the trumpet from his lips in shot (2), the riff stops, and when he raises it to his mouth in shot (8) the riff returns. The movement of the spacecraft, too, remains spatially defined within both image and the soundtrack: in shots (3), (5) and (6) its position in relation to the camera corresponds to the volume of its engine sounds on the soundtrack. Finally, the volume of hoof sounds and marching feet in shots (13) and (15)-(21) similarly rises and falls depending on the position within the frame of the horses and guards from which these sounds originate. Also important in establishing coherent sonic space in this sequence is its articulation of *off-screen* space through the inclusion of sounds that do not explicitly originate from within the frame: the whooshing sound of the wind, for example, the trumpet riff in shot (9), the sound of the spacecraft's engine in shot (4) and the hoof sounds in shot (14).

This is to say nothing of the important role that both music and voiceover narration play in aiding the supportive interaction between sound and image in this sequence. As well as their base function of smoothing over the joins between shots, both serve to back up and reinforce *tonal* aspects conveyed by *2019*'s *mise-en-scène*. Images of a dimly-lit New York in ruins and obscured by fog create a distinct sense of unease matched by the eerie and ominous drone of the synthesised score that creeps into the opening shots, and the foregrounding of the synthesiser (itself as a lead instrument defined by its "futuristic" timbre) helps to underline the *temporal* location of shots presented. In addition, the sombre tone and clinical, officious language employed by the narrator help to reinforce the bleak and grave atmosphere created by the interaction between sound and image, as well as performing the obvious task of literally telling the story.

A number of these devices work across the *filoni*, particularly at the points where narrative information needs to be conveyed and, as a consequence, the threat of excess posed by attractions must be minimised. The opening "bag theft" scene of *Uomini si nasce poliziotti si muore / Live Like a Cop, Die Like a Man* (Italy, Ruggero Deodato, 1976), for example, relies on the constant articulation of noises such as the

bell being rung by Santa, the yells of onlookers and the sound of the motorbike engines to provide coherence to the events that it depicts. *Mannaja / A Man Called Blade* (Italy, Sergio Martino, 1977) too, although it relies on the confusion of space and time in the image to present its attractions, retains a modicum of cohesion through the sounds of Craven's heavy breathing, horse's hooves and splashes, which change in volume depending on their distance from the camera. Although there is a notable degree of incoherence in the relations between shots in these sequences, for such incoherence to habitually exist *within* them would result in a film that was excessive to the point of simply not making sense; by creating a supportive relationship between sound and image in these scenes this threat can be minimised.

6.5 Divergent Interaction

Although I have gone to some length to stress the continuities present in the opening scene of *2019*, this does not detract from the habitually excessive nature of its visuals and their interaction with the soundtrack. There are a number of clear mismatches in this scene, and by re-examining the sequence of shots presented in Figure 6.4.1 I wish to investigate what *other* modes of interaction are at work here, at the same time broadening my scope by considering examples from other *filoni*. Perhaps the most immediate mismatch of sound and image occurs in shot (1) when it is revealed that the synthesised notes of the trumpet are in fact being played by the trumpeter within the frame. Within this shot the *filone's* fundamental sonic mismatch of post-dubbing creates a discrepancy between image and sound, for the movement of the trumpeter's fingers on his instrument's valves are asynchronous with the timing of the heard notes throughout the sequence. Their dubbed nature notwithstanding, the notes on the soundtrack create another central mismatch: the trumpeter is supposed to be playing the notes, but their synthesised timbre, stylised reverb and quick linear fadeout are completely anachronistic with any sound that could be produced by an acoustic brass instrument. Furthermore, the fact that the notes played by the trumpeter are in the key of B Major and are therefore complementary to the backing synth score (itself in B Major) further undermines continuities of sonic space in the scene: the synth notes produced on the soundtrack are simply more "true" to the non-diegetic musical accompaniment than they are to the real trumpet being played on screen.

There are a number of other sonic mismatches across this sequence, the most prolonged of which exists between the voice-over narration from shot (11) onwards and the images chosen to accompany it. While voice-over narration is typically used to provide narrative information, set up the dramatic events to be discussed, or provide an insight into the thoughts and emotions of a particular character within a film, in *2019* this process is rendered more tenuous through the often unclear relationship between the voice-over and the images that accompany it. Across this sequence of shots, the words spoken by the narrator seem to bear little relation to the images that they are (supposedly) providing commentary to. New York may be in ruins, but the shots of this sequence (and the scenes that follow) do not portray it as a “garbage-strewn desert”. The narrator refers to “deformed creatures”, but within the film the only deformities presented are the toxic facial burns of the human characters, underlining the hyperbolic nature of the voice-over’s word choice: significantly, even the *language* of the soundtrack used here is excessive, and the lack of adequate visual information to back it up further increases the sense of mismatch conveyed. Like the promotional posters described in the opening chapter, the soundtrack to this sequence creates a promise of dramatic spectacle that its actual *mise-en-scène* fails to live up to. Finally, when the narrator says the words “New York City: a huge pile of waste and rubble”, the tone of his voice suggests that he is commenting on the shot presented, which would typically be an establishing long shot, or at the very least contain a visual referent to New York (skyscrapers; the Statue of Liberty, for example). This does not happen, however, and the film instead focuses on an excessive shot – a high-angle tracking, panning and tilting close-up of horses’ hooves and guards’ faces – in shot (15). In fact, the only direct link between the narrator’s words and the images presented while he is speaking is made through his mention of the Eurak military force, presumably represented by the uniform-wearing guards of the sequence. The *filone*’s dual focus nature is particularly evident in shots like this: image and sound at this point seem to each be conveying their own discrete information, the latter presenting the viewer with *narrative* information whilst the former accentuates the to-be-looked-at-ness of centrally-framed hooves; exotic costume and exaggerated camera movement.

Prior to offering a summary of this mode of interaction, I would like to return to the work of Gorbman, who suggests that one of film music's central functions is to prevent moments like this from emerging, arguing that:

A second kind of displeasure that music helps to ward off is the spectator's potential recognition of the technological basis of filmic articulation. Gaps, cuts, the frame itself, silences in the soundtrack – any reminders of cinema's materiality which jeopardise the formation of subjectivity – the process whereby the viewer identifies as subject of filmic discourse – are smoother over, or 'spirited away' by the carefully regulated operations of film music. The loss of identification which filmic discourse constantly threatens, via the very means that carry the narrative (cutting, the frame, etc) – this loss of pleasure is countered in part by the particular ways in which the classical film takes advantage of music.

(2003, pp.40-41)

One immediate point of note in this argument is the fact that Gorbman, like Dickinson, lays stress on the *displeasure* that is caused by moments of sonic excess and the revelation of the "materiality" that Sconce and Hawkins cite as essential to the paracinematic aesthetic: such a revelation, for Gorbman, threatens and distances the spectator from narration in a film. Although "displeasure" is not a term I have generally used in my own analysis of the films, Gorbman's use of the term in a *narrative* context resonates with my own assertion that the excesses of the *filone*'s numbers pose a direct threat to suspense and the other specifically narrative pleasures identified. Recalling the taxonomy of excessive devices laid out by the last chapter, I would like to argue that there are points in the *filone* where the mismatch between image and sound takes the shape of a *divergence*; where the soundtrack creates excess by drawing attention to itself and conveying autonomous information that conflicts with the information being presented by the image.

There are numerous points across the sequence where image and sound diverge in this way to create the ambivalence essential to Dickinson's mismatch arguments. The notes of a trumpet are asynchronous to the movements of the trumpeter's fingers; the sound of the trumpet is clearly synthesised and seemingly non-diegetic; a voice-over describes a 'garbage-strewn radioactive desert devoid of humans' while at the same time portraying a number of working industrial buildings, a group of horses and a regiment of human soldiers. In itself, for example, the sound of a synthesised trumpet

is not excessive, but when this sound is combined with the image of somebody blowing a *real* trumpet the excess created by this combination becomes apparent. Just as the slow-motion shots and crash zooms of *Mannaja* foreground the apparatus and disturb continuity, so too do these sonic schisms undermine narrative and create excess through their divergence from the images that they accompany.

2019 is not alone in presenting this type of mismatch as one of its key sonic spectacles. Although the orchestral score of *mondo horror filone Cannibal Holocaust* (Italy, Ruggero Deodato, 1980), for example, typically adopts a foreboding tone during some of the film's more gruesome and disturbing scenes of violence (the burning of an Amazonian Indian tribe's village; an Amazonian abortion rite; the hacking up of a live turtle; the castration of one of the central characters), there are points during these prolonged scenes where the ominous soundtrack fades out and is replaced by the film's poignant and upbeat easy-listening *leitmotif*. This tune plays as the village burns, and notably also at the end of the film when two of the other central characters are brutally clubbed to death by Indians. Furthermore, these scenes are frequently punctuated by the upbeat "boo" sound of a synth tom, which sounds during the most gruesome moments presented by the film. For a film which many regard to be the most explicit and obscene of the *filoni* (and of the films incriminated in the "video nasty" debates of the time) to present as an attraction the mismatch between such upbeat soundtrack elements and the often grotesque images that it revels in creates a distinct sense of unease that adds to the disturbing nature of the film. As Dickinson notes in her discussion of synthesiser scoring in *Cannibal Holocaust*:

During the sequence where one of the documentary crew is castrated, dismembered, decapitated and devoured, the composition is up-tempo and positively groovy (albeit infringed upon by the occasional discordant string surge). Nothing of the viscera spilling across the screen is captured by the music; the washes of synthesizer resemble buzzing electrical currents rather than anything more corporeal. The soundtrack's signature sine-y "pow" noises also make a return visit. These flourishes, which are common to disco tracks like Kelly Marie's "Feel Like I'm in Love" (1980), erupt very much like little explosions of pleasure - part of a disco firework display. It is as if the ambivalence of the film wished not only to proclaim the proximity of pleasure to pain, but also to unmask the menacing underbelly of disco hedonism.

(2007, p.12)

Dickinson also notes the predominance of the synth within the Italian *filoni* that she examines, suggesting that the lack of sonic depth that they effect creates an inherent mismatch when they are used to accompany violent images. Such uses of the musical score illustrate a “spandex-like effortlessness and a disinterest in pain” (2004), as Dickinson suggests. These arguments also draw analogously to my own points surrounding the revelation of the apparatus when Dickinson suggests that “the shallow quality of these soundtracks also seems to be reminding the viewer of the fragile and ghostly presence of the flickering cinematic form” (2004, p.9). This *divergent* interaction, occurring between two contrasting “meanings” conveyed by image and soundtrack, is the most extreme of the mismatches identified: the idea that there seems to be neither a narrative *nor* a “spectacular” purpose for this type of interaction accounts for its comparative rarity in the films, for it is hard to discern what, if anything, the *filoni* are trying to “do” by using it.⁸⁸

To conclude this section of the chapter I would like to concentrate on another feature of sonic spectacle that my discussion has raised: the use of then-contemporary popular music and lyrical pop songs across the different cycles. Again, this formal feature arose largely as a result of the industry’s typically hyperbolic marketing, for the release of a film was frequently accompanied by the aggressive marketing of a .45 showcasing one of its songs. Ennio Morricone’s iconic title theme to the western *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo / The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (Italy / Spain, Sergio Leone, 1966), for example, was released as a single to coincide with the release of the film, and in 1966 topped the pop charts of the UK and a number of countries worldwide (Guardian News and Media Ltd 2008). The song “More” from 1962 *mondo* film *Mondo Cane* (Italy, Paulo Cavara / Gualtiero Jacopetti, 1962) was released as a single and in fact won an Oscar in 1964 for “Best Music: Original Song” (imdb.com 1990). A later example of this was Dario Argento’s horror *filone* *Phenomena* (Italy, 1985), the promotional campaign for which was based round the credit “featuring music by Motörhead and Iron Maiden”. With the release of the film

⁸⁸ This is not to suggest that the combination of inappropriately upbeat music and graphic imagery is a trait particular to the *filone*: a number of Hollywood films – both *Reservoir Dogs* (USA, Quentin Tarantino, 1992) and *Goodfellas* (USA, Martin Scorsese, 1990) present similar scenes where upbeat pop songs are used to soundtrack murders. Dickinson’s argument, in fact, could easily be extended to these two particular films: both the scenes mentioned were widely criticised for the “extremity” of their violence and one central reason for this could be the similar sense of ambiguity created by such tunes’ refusal to comment on the violent acts that they accompany.

came two singles: “The Valley” by Bill Wyman and “Phenomena” by Claudio Simonetti, the latter of which was in the Italian Top Ten for several weeks and featured an Argento-directed music video. Such tunes could work to promote the films that they were released with, at the same time reaping profit from their use within them: as Donnelly notes of the use of contemporary pop music in Hammer films, the inclusion of and emphasis on tunes like was an attempt to give the films a cutting-edge modernity and to “furnish [them] films with a pop culture credibility” (2005, p.101).

Italian western themes like *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo* provide notable examples of the sonic mismatches resulting from the inclusion of contemporary pop music in the *filone*. Until the 1960s the most internationally prolific and successful western films were American in origin, their soundtracks typified by both traditional frontier ballads and – as Eleftheriotis (2001) observes of *The Searchers* – lyrical songs posing narrative questions like “*What makes a man to wander?*”. Bearing this in mind, it is hard to imagine what the reactions of worldwide audiences initially were to the starkly contrasting score introduced by Morricone in *Per un pugno di dollari* in 1964. Punctuated by whip cracks, pre-lingual grunts, whistles and electric guitar riffs, the film’s title theme – unlike that of *Shane* – bears little relation to the historical period, ideological concerns or folk tradition of the American West. A more discernable intertextual referent in the Western *filone* soundtracks of the 1960s is the “twangy” guitar-driven beat-pop of contemporary artists like Gene Vincent, Link Wray, the Shadows, Elvis Presley and Johnny Kidd and the Pirates: consciously aping these successful artists allotted many of the *filoni* a “cool” factor that could be used to increase their profits.

This trend continued into the 1970s, where *filone* scores began to incorporate jazz, funk and disco numbers: the international popularity of *Dirty Harry* and its Lalo Schifrin score ensured that the resulting waves of *poliziotteschi* were crammed with brass and guitar-led funk breakbeat tracks, with Franco Micalizzi’s *Napoli violenta* (Italy, Umberto Lenzi, 1976), Armando Trovaioli’s *Una magnum speciale per Tony Saitta / Blazing Magnum* (Italy / Canada / Panama, Alberto De Martino, 1976) and Stelvio Cipriani’s *La polizia ha le mani legate / Killer Cop* (Italy, Luciano Ercoli,

1974) soundtracks being prominent exponents of this.⁸⁹ *Gialli* such as *Profondo Rosso / Deep Red* (Italy, Dario Argento, 1975) – and, in fact, *Solamente Nero / The Blood Stained Shadow* (Italy, Antonio Bido, 1978) – foregrounded the “progressive jazz” scores of Claudio Simonetti and his band Goblin: these scores’ improvisatory nature and changing time signatures offering a suitable accompaniment to the equally meandering murder sequences that they accompanied. With the 1980s came an increasing reliance on synth and electronic scores like that of *2019*, coupled with the use of heavy metal and progressive rock soundtracks in horror films like *Phenomena, Dèmoni / Demons* (Italy, Lamberto Bava, 1985) and *Troll 2* (Italy, Claudio Fragasso, 1990). The marketing potential of popular music in the *filone* is further accentuated by its tendency to place these songs, particularly those with lyrics, in its opening and closing credits sequences; an act which separates them even more from the actual visual content of the films themselves. The majority of these songs are sung in (often phonetic and badly-phrased) English, by Italian singers – even in Italian-language versions of the films – and frequently provide a sonic mismatch by belonging to musical genres that do not correspond with the tone and / or period of the images presented. *Mannaja*’s prog rock score and *Django*’s Mediterranean-influenced, Roy Orbison-esque love ballad are two notable examples. Furthermore, given the context of these films’ release in Italy, the use of English language songs in Italian films seems to create a *linguistic* mismatch that further confounds the relationship between sound and image.

These tunes are not entirely without relevance to the plots that they bookend, of course: as the analysis of *Uomini si nasce poliziotti si muore*’s title theme in Chapter Four illustrated, tunes like “Maggie” refer to the characters of the diegesis and set up themes to be explored by the film. In truth, the lyrics of these songs often work – like the voiceover in *2019* – to provide exposition and allow the film to progress at a faster pace, acting almost as a “Greek chorus” filling in the blanks left by the film’s visuals. The origins and history of characters like the “heroes” of *Django* and *Napoli violenta*, for example, are never expanded upon during the films, but they form the basis of their credit sequences nonetheless. The former tune – written by Luis Enriquez

⁸⁹ A testament to the sonic spectacle provided by these *poliziotteschi* soundtracks is their continuing popularity in contemporary cult film discourses; a number of websites now offer CD copies of these original and long-out-of-print soundtracks.

Bacalov – opens by posing the question “Django – have you always been alone?” before describing how Django “loved her” then “lost her”, assuring its hero that “you cannot spend your life regretting”, while the latter film places Franco Micalizzi’s title song in the closing titles, describing Tanzi as “a man before your time” and asking him “why do you feel alone with a life to spend?”.⁹⁰ As many references to the films’ plots as these songs make, however, it seems that their principal function is not to support the film’s narrative themes but simply to *sound good*, the attraction that they provide being further aided by the frequent mismatch between the songs and the images that they accompany.

6.6 Directive Interaction

Another central tendency that can be traced in the *filone*’s use of sound is its frequent attempt to bolster the visual attractions offered by aligning them with equally stylised *sonic spectacles*. While the mismatch offered by the divergent interaction of sound and image arises from sonic spectacles which “pull” the viewer’s attention from images that convey contrasting information (the voiceover in *2019*, for example), the mismatch here is one caused by the use of sonic excess to reinforce and *direct* the viewer’s attention to the to-be-looked-at-ness of the images presented. A representative example of this type of interaction can be found by returning to the “zombie attack” sequence from *Incubo sulla città contaminata / Nightmare City* (Italy / Mexico / Spain, Umberto Lenzi, 1980), which makes the modal shift between supportive and directive interaction very clear. When the televised “disco dance” number begins, it is initially mediated from the point-of-view of the diegetic video cameras in the studio (a bracketing mechanism that indicates the beginning of the number), and the ensuing shots thus present a “television audience’s eye-view” of the dance. As noted, several of the (mostly female) dancers look directly into the screen, smiling at the camera: they are shot from a number of high and low angles, and the camera tracks around their bodies, at one point centering two of the dancing girls’ bottoms within the frame in close-up. Additionally, a number of *audiences* are

⁹⁰ These songs are particularly common in the western and *poliziotteschi* cycles and largely absent from the more downbeat post-apocalyptic science-fiction films like *2019*, where voiceover narration provides a more “serious” way of conveying the information.

articulated as the sequence progresses: the camera and sound technicians are seen watching the dance, the crew in the control room are watching it on their monitors, and repeated shots of television screens work to imply a larger off-screen audience. In summary, the emphasis here is quite patently on the display of spectacle (the female body, the implied eroticism and choreography of the dance), configured by the presence in this sequence of most of Mellencamp's codes of to-be-looked-at-ness.

This is to say nothing of the somewhat marginal role that sound plays in this sequence, however. The dance is accompanied throughout by an upbeat synth and trumpet-led Latin easy listening disco tune in 4/4 timing that dominates the audio mix. The relationship between audio and image here is predominantly supportive, for it provides an unobtrusive backing to the more important attractions provided by the dance sequence (which are at this point not particularly powerful, given that they occur safely within the confines of a diegetic television show): sound here seems to be providing what Gorbman calls:

[...] a gel, a space, a language, a cradle, a beat, a signifier of internal depth and emotion as well as a provider of emphasis on visual movement and spectacle.

(2003, p.39)

The “gelling” effect of this soundtrack is further accentuated by the positioning of the tune's source as diegetic: although no speakers are discernible in the shots presented, when the sequence cuts to interior shots from the control room the volume of the music on the soundtrack is diminished and muffled slightly, establishing a separate acoustic space and adding spatial perspective to the soundtrack. In the following shots, however, the relationship between sound and image changes radically. As the dance and music continue, one of the cameramen looks away from the dancers and sees the body of another dancer, her throat slashed and blood trailing from her mouth: this attraction is further heightened by the use of a fast-tilting crash zoom into a close-up of her injuries and a subsequent tilting extreme close-up of her bloody neck. As the cameraman looks on in horror, a zombie invades the sound stage, stabbing him in the neck repeatedly with a knife, and a number of other zombies burst through the set to attack the dancers. Although the dancing has stopped by this stage, the easy listening disco tune has not, and a mismatch between the violent attractions presented and the upbeat tune quickly changes the primary interaction of sound and image in this scene

to a *divergent one* that can be analogised with *Mannaja*'s use of the "dance music" to accompany its stagecoach massacre. It is no coincidence that this shift occurs as the violent number begins proper and the dance number ends: here, excess (created primarily by the violent visuals but accentuated by the fact that *Incubo*'s soundtrack does not change to respond to the changing narrative events) rises to the surface and becomes the film's central script of focus.

This is not the only shift in sound / image relations taking place here, though: as more zombies appear and begin to attack the dancers, the pop tune fades out, suggesting that it has either finished playing in the studio or that someone has turned it off. After only one second of silence, however, a *new* tune fades into the soundtrack as the violence escalates, accompanied by loud screams, groans and over-amplified sounds of bodily mutilation. This second piece of music is not as vibrant as the disco track that preceded it: led by a synth, it presents a fairly uptempo progressive rock tune that – because of its 6/8 triplet time signature – lumbers forward without urgency. Such a tune is not wholly appropriate for accompanying such bloody *mise-en-scène*: where a mainstream horror film would typically reinforce these visuals with the uncanny and manipulative scores like the ominous Latin choral chant of *The Omen* (USA, Richard Donner, 1976) or *Halloween*'s (USA, John Carpenter, 1978) stark piano riff, *Incubo* instead presents a far less supportive type of soundtrack and it is unclear what comment, if any, this music has to make on the images that it backs up. That said, *Incubo*'s new tune is not *inappropriate* in the way that the easy listening track was, and thus does not create a divergence between sound and image. What this tune *does* do, however, is encourage the viewer to brood on and digest the spectacles (and attractions) that it accompanies. Although the soundtrack mismatches with the image by remaining ambivalent about the violent actions that the latter is depicting, it is through this ambivalence that the tune can provide a "backing track" that does not so much encroach upon but *points towards* the visual attractions provided.

I would like to illustrate this relationship – which I shall call *directive* interaction – by referring to some other examples. *Uomini* for one seems to begin with this type of interaction at the forefront of its title scene: the lyrics of "Maggie" bear little relationship to the film or the images that accompany them, but it is hard to deny that the visual spectacles provided by the scene (cosmopolitan Rome, the chassis of the

bike, the close-ups of Fred and Tony) have the same impact *without* the title theme contributing to this. Argento's *Tenebre* (Italy, 1982) also relies on directive interaction in many of its key scenes, a notable example being its famous seven minute long tracking shot (occurring in the film before the murder of two lesbian women) where the camera slowly "floats" in a seemingly completely unmotivated manner around the outside of the house and inside its rooms. For the majority of these seven minutes the camera is focusing on arbitrary details of walls, windows and doors, playing the *filone's* game of spectatorship by purposely delaying the violent climax to the scene with a shot that is almost entirely excessive to the narrative. This game is even further highlighted by the film's soundtrack, which marks the beginning of the number and conveys the promise of violence before accompanying the meandering camera movement with a steady synth-driven progressive rock track from Goblin. The music continues throughout the murder of the first woman, but the game that *Tenebrae* is playing with its viewer is foregrounded in the following shots, where her partner is alerted by a noise and turns off her record player – an action that is immediately accompanied by the tune's cessation. Although such an obvious play with diegetic and non-diegetic soundtrack elements is comparatively rare in the other *filoni* examined, *Tenebrae's* conflation of the two illustrates how the films' frequent spectatorial games often extend to and are reliant on excess in their soundtracks.

A final aspect contributing to the ambiguousness of these directive scores is the fact that, as most of them feature drums and are regulated by mechanical time signatures, a great deal of their potential to change in tempo and adjust to the events on screen is lost. Referring to the use of the pop song in cinema, Donnelly argues that the inclusion of music like this "harnesses and articulates time" and "concretises time by converting real or experiential time into a regulated musical time" (2001, p.28). This is apparent both in *Incubo* and *Tenebrae*, where each film's score is harnessed to its mechanical synth drum beat and does not adjust, intensify or alter itself in any way to correspond with the violent attractions presented on screen. The way in which delays and spatio-temporal inconsistency in these numbers work against the creation of narrative trajectory, suspense and horror is therefore mirrored by a soundtrack that does not change in tack to heighten or manipulate the viewer as the numbers progress. Most significantly, the very fact that these scores do *not* build up to a climax or give any indication when the violent acts are going to take place in the narrative is

essential to the “surprise” effect (discussed in Chapter Five) that provides a central viewing pleasure in scenes like this.

In contrast to these films, *Uomini*’s title track *does* in fact change, progressing from a light and sparse finger-picked acoustic guitar-led verse to a louder chorus with drums and bass. When this change occurs halfway through the sequence it does not correspond to a change in the *mise-en-scène* or the pace of the editing, however: the sequence carries on as before, presenting the same spectacles but with a different type of sonic support, as if the change in dynamics was necessary to further prolong the visual attractions presented. While Dickinson argues that at moments like this “it is almost as if [the Italian horror film soundtrack] did not care about what it was watching and just wanted to carry on having a good time” (2004, p.7), this does not seem to be the case. A more accurate summary would be that during these scenes the *filone* soundtrack does not care about the *specifics* of what it is watching but tries nonetheless to ensure they are rendered spectacular throughout.

6.7 Violence and Mutual Interaction

I would like to turn my attention now to an examination of how the soundtrack of the *filone* can be “violent” in itself, and in doing this introduce the suggestion that that the *filone* often relies on the to-be-listened-to-ness of its soundtrack to create discrete sonic spectacles and often enhance the effect of the attractions presented by its visuals. The three models of image / sound interaction that I have discussed account for a wide range of relationships in the *filone*: the next model that I wish to discuss, however, arises during the numerous moments where both visual and aural attractions are *simultaneously* deployed to create a unified effect on the viewer. I shall call this type of interaction *mutual* interaction, which typically occurs during scenes of violence and involves the combination of visual attractions *and* sonic excesses to intensify the spectacle(s) of violence presented.

The most notable way in which this effect is realised is through the change in *sound effects* occurring between the *filone*’s narrative scenes and its numbers, a point that I wish to illustrate with reference to the *poliziotteschi* *Luca il contrabbandiere* / *The*

Naples Connection (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1980). The film follows the exploits of Luca di Angelo (played by Italian *poliziotteschi* stalwart Fabio Testi), a Naples dockside worker who smuggles cigarettes and liquor into the port with his brother to make extra money. Unhappy that their own smuggling operation is being threatened, the Naples *Mafia* kill Luca's brother, prompting him to embark on a quest for revenge, eventually killing all of those responsible. The number to be examined occurs thirty minutes into the film, when Luca meets an informant beside a deserted volcanic tar pit and is ambushed by a *Mafioso*. This occurs immediately after a narrative-focused scene where Luca takes his young son and wife to the hippodrome, during which sonic space remains coherent throughout: the volume of characters' dialogue increases and decreases according to their position within the frame; the light whoosh of wind interacts with the windy *mise-en-scène*, and off-screen space is continually reinforced by the sound of horses' hooves in the background. In contrast, from the beginning of the scene to be examined these sound effects immediately become more stylised: dimly-lit shots of the steaming volcanic spa are accompanied by on the soundtrack by the cry of "Luca!!!" – which, like the horse's hooves and splash sounds in *Mannaja*, is characterised by its stylised reverb effect – as the informant, hiding in the door of a mine shaft, tries to get Luca's attention. Already there seems to be a sonic mismatch in evidence: although there is nothing wrong with adding reverb to a sound effect to suggest that it is taking place within a mine, the fact that the informant is at the door of the mine facing *outwards* yet continues to have a reverberating voice well *after* he has walked out of the mine creates a disjunctive interaction.

Luca talks to the informant, who provides him with the necessary information and goes on his way, but when Luca turns his back the *Mafioso* appears and stabs the informant in the heart before running away. As Luca runs after him, a synth-led funk track (typically lacking in suspense and urgency) emerges on the soundtrack, instigating the promise of violence, marking the scene as a number and beginning the scene's central game with the viewer. However, as the music continues to accompany Luca catching and fighting the *Mafioso*, a new type of interaction emerges, taking place between the sound effects and the images that they accompany. Where the sounds presented in the previous hippodrome sequence provided a sense of spatial continuity and realism through their varying volume in relation to the camera and articulation of off-screen space, during this fight scene the sounds presented are

uniformly loud and “visible”. The *Mafioso* swings a knife at Luca: its loud “whoosh” can be heard over both the music and the sound of the men grappling. Luca punches the *Mafioso* in the face: there is a deafening “crack” that briefly usurps every other element of the sonic hierarchy. Luca finally overcomes the *Mafioso* by knocking him into a boiling hot volcanic tar pit: after another loud “crack” when the punch connects, the camera cuts to a heavily stylised aerial shot of the Mafiosi falling into the pit, further heightening the violent attraction arising from the combination of the high-angle shot, its violent content and slow-motion cinematography by drowning out his loud screams with a loud bubbling noise. Although both men have been fighting beside the tar pit for over a minute, this is the first time in the whole sequence that the bubbling sound is heard on the soundtrack: it is only when the tar pit’s capacity to inflict violence (the *Mafioso* is scalded to death) that the film invests it with any sonic importance whatsoever.

Sound effects in violent numbers like this are often characterised by the excessively stylised nature of their *timbre* as well as their loud volume. Whether *Luca il contrabbandiere*’s punches, scaldings and echoes offer truly realistic representations of their real-life equivalents is doubtful, but such is the overinvestment in these sounds through high volume that this is a largely trivial point anyway: the central pleasure that these sounds provide is that of watching and listening to similarly excessive visual and sonic elements combine to heighten the spectacle of violence. Each of the *filone* cycles has its own stock-in-trade of overinvested sound effects: the fistfights and gunshots that typify Western and *poliziotteschi* films, for example, are rendered more spectacular by the inclusion of loud punches and explosions on the soundtrack. The rogue cop anti-hero of *Roma a mano armata / Rome, Armed to the Teeth* (Italy, Umberto Lenzi, 1976) beats up an increasing number of criminals with his fists as the film progresses, and each of his punches – like those thrown by Luca – are accompanied by “impossibly” loud thuds and crunches as they land. When Django finally confronts and shoots dead the man responsible for burying him alive at the climax of *Django il bastardo / Django the Bastard* (Italy, Sergio Garrone, 1974), his gunshots completely dominate the soundtrack. Science-fiction films like *2019* and *Contamination* (Italy, Luigi Cozzi, 1980) are punctuated by loud and unreal sounds of laser guns, spacecraft, aliens and robots just as the central sonic motifs of horror films and *gialli* like *Demoni* and *Malastrana / Short Night of the Glass Dolls* (Italy / West

Germany / Yugoslavia, Aldo Lado, 1971) oscillate between “wet” sounds of tearing, stabbing and the ubiquitous horror motif of the female scream.

6.8 Substitutive Interaction

Increasing the spectacular effect of the film’s visuals is not the sole function of these stylised sound effects, however: they are equally used in their own right to accompany the *filone*’s frequent game of looking away from violence. The aforementioned “scalping” scene from western *filone* *Se sei vivo, spara! / Django, Kill...If you Live, Shoot!* (Spain / Italy, Giulio Questi, 1967) again provides a strong example of this trend. With an upbeat guitar-led tune playing in the background (signalling the beginning of the number, offering the promise of violence and creating excess through its divergent interaction with the gruesome images presented), the film bolsters the visual impact of this act by cutting between a number of extreme close-ups of blood dripping down the victim’s chin, extreme close-ups of the knife making a deep gash in his forehead, and fragmented close-ups of the leering faces of the onlookers, who function as the ubiquitous diegetic audience increasing the to-be-looked-at-ness of the violent act. As the scalp is removed, however, the film cuts *away* from this act to another extreme close-up, which depicts a bald man licking his lips and rubbing his head as he watches the scalping, accompanied by an unnaturally loud fleshy “squishing” sound. Although the horrible climax to the scalping is not explicitly shown by the camera, its violence is still conveyed to the viewer by excessive nature of the sound effect, suggesting that in many cases the responsibility for conveying a “graphic” depiction of violence can in fact be delegated to the *filone*’s *soundtrack* itself. Significantly, the look away from violence presented here is not as visually excessive as most of the examples I have discussed, which typically use crash zooms or exaggerated camera movements to present the viewer with discrete visual attractions: the attraction here, however, arises specifically from the combination of the discontinuously-edited look away with a sound effect whose loud stylised nature foregrounds the violence of the apparatus itself. Having presented the beginning of the act on screen, *Se sei vivo spara* can then introduce a sound that in another context could connote an entirely different meaning (the “scalping” sounds like a wet sponge being squeezed or a plug sucking up bathwater) as a *substitute* for explicitly depicting

the violent act. Markedly, the *filone*'s deployment of sonic spectacles like this at the precise moments where its game of looking away takes place only further seems to add to their effectiveness, for they explicitly remind the viewer of what he or she is not being granted the privilege to see.

This idea is reiterated by Brophy in his study of American exploitation films, where he suggests that similarly excessive sonic motifs – particularly the female scream – are often used as surrogates for acts which cannot be depicted on the visual track:

Where required, sound can stand in for the unseeable and image can be sublimated by sound. [...] Like the bird that tweets morning, the siren that signals work, the bell that tolls death, the angel that sings rest, the scream in the cinema operates as a phoneme for that which cannot or does not want to be shown.

(1999b, pp.53-54)

One of the most common acts of violence that Brophy's study stresses *cannot* be shown is rape, which is a common theme across the exploitation films that he examines. The female scream therefore acts as an "ero-sonic" moment, granting the viewer a sonic image of "graphic vaginal penetration under force" that the visual track dare not show (1999b, p.53). Although sexual violence and pornography are by no means widespread in the *filoni* examined, Brophy's description of the female scream as an "sonic cum shot" nonetheless suggests a specific use of the film's audio track to provide what Williams (1989) – referring specifically to the visual aspects of the porn film – calls "proof of pleasure". Transposing this to *filoni* like *Se sei vivo spara*, the sounds brought to the forefront during the look away and obscured look can be seen to work as "proof of pain", fulfilling the promise of excess set up by the shots that preceded them. These games ensure that violent acts may not always be graphically shown on screen, but as long as their graphic nature is conveyed through excessive elements of the *filone*'s soundtrack, all is well.

Finally, the prominence within the *filone*'s sonic hierarchy of over-amplified sounds involving the *body* – screams, death rattles, stabbings, neck breakings, and the tearing of flesh – suggests that such sonic proof of pain is essential to spectacle and attractions created by violence. The importance of this as one of the *filone*'s major "selling points" is further highlighted by recent DVD releases of horror and *giallo*

filoni such as *giallo Non si sevizia un paperino / Don't Torture a Duckling* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1978) and, unsurprisingly, *Zombi 2 / Zombie Flesh Eaters* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1979), both of which advertise remastered and remixed 5.1 DTS audio mixes. Notably, these mixes place an even greater emphasis on the wet and fleshy sonic spectacles of the films, to the extent that each loud and stylised sound effect is assigned its own speaker within the 5.1 surround sound system. I would like to call this final mode of sound / image interaction *substitutive*, for it relies on the substitution of sonic spectacle in place of the violent visual spectacles that the *filone* frequently does *not* show as part of its spectatorial game.

6.9 Conclusion

In summary, sound and music interact with the visual track of the *filone* in a number of differing ways. At their least obtrusive – and particularly during dialogue and narrative scenes where the advancement of plot and creation of narrative space is prioritised – they are content to provide *supportive* interaction with mise-en-scène and editing patterns, allowing for the necessary immersion in the story and investment in the characters presented. When the ominous opening shots of *2019*'s ruined city are accompanied by an equally foreboding synth tone, for example, audio and visual tracks are working in tandem to provide the viewer with a distinct narrative pleasure.

This model does not account, though, for the numerous points – particularly during the *filone*'s numbers – when a *mismatch* between image and sound is exploited to provide spectacle, the least extreme of these mismatches occurring when sound (and typically music) presents a *directive* interaction with image, remaining largely ambivalent about the visual attractions presented yet underpinning and directing attention towards the quality of their to-be-looked-at-ness. An illustration of this can be found in the laid-back jazz waltz that fades in to accompany the delays presented by the latter half of *Uomini*'s bike chase, or in the disco tune accompanying *Incubo*'s initial dance sequence: these actions and the way in which they are shot already renders them spectacular, but the fact remains that they look better when accompanied by appropriate music.

A more extreme type of relationship occurs when excessive images and excessive sounds *mutually* interact to increase the spectacle offered by typically violent acts within the *filone*. This type of interaction is common across the films, and helps to intensify the violence of the acts depicted, with excessive sounds being used to amplify the punches, screams, tearing sounds and gunshots that punctuate the numbers. For example, when one of the villains of *Luca il contrabbandiere* is shot dead by a shotgun-wielding *Mafia capo* at the end of the film, a distinctive attraction is created by the combination of an loud gunshot sound and scream with an extreme close-up of fleshy chunks flying out of the entry-wound, both image and sound working together to heighten the violence of the diegetic act presented.

Of equal note is the *filone*'s tendency of using combinations of image and sound to *imply* violence by shifting it to the soundtrack, creating a *substitutive* relationship between the two elements. I have laid stress throughout on the frequency with which the *floni* are accused of “brutality” and “sadism”: there is a distinct irony, however, in the fact that the films often just as commonly look *away* from violence as they do directly *at* it, and the use of excessive soundtrack elements is fundamental to “proving” that violence has taken place during spectatorial games like this. As a final example in this chapter, western *filone* *Il grande silenzio / The Big Silence* (Italy / France, Sergio Corbucci, 1968) presents a flashback narrative scene where the film's protagonist (Silence) shoots an already-dead villain in the head while another – a corrupt official – looks on. This particular example offers an interesting variant on the looks away already discussed, for as the bullet hits his head the camera crash zooms from a close-up of his face *past* his face and into the horrified expression of the official. Although the impact of the bullet is indicated by the jerk of the dead man's head, the fact that this act is *de-emphasised* in comparison with the attraction provided by the crash zoom and – crucially – the loud gunshot sound, whose long decaying echo mismatches the confined sonic space of the brothel – suggests that the act of looking away is more important than the explicit depiction of the violent act itself. A central observation arises in sequences like this: sometimes the *filone* can use its soundtrack and the revelation of its apparatus to create a violence far more powerful than could have been conveyed by showing the act actually happen.

The order in which this conclusion has summarised these relationships indicates an increasing focus on the excess script of the *filone*, with supportive interaction being the most narrative-focused of the relationships and directive, mutual and substitutive interactions reflecting the increasing weakening of narrative continuities and privileging of spectacle that these interactions effect. The final and most extreme mismatch at the other end of the scale, then, is *divergent* interaction, where image and sound are at loggerheads, and produce as their central attraction an awareness of the filmic apparatus that again recalls paracinema's emphasis on the viewing pleasures arising from observing a film's material identity. As noted, this type of relationship is fundamental to the *filoni* due to Italian post-dubbing practices, but it also occurs in the many fundamental mismatches throughout the films: the use of synthesisers to provide sounds for acoustic trumpets; the combination of easy listening music with images of extreme violence; the bloody stagecoach massacre accompanied by an upbeat dancing tune.

As my analysis of *Luca il contrabbandiere* illustrated, these relationships are not mutually exclusive, and can work at the same time on diegetic sound and non-diegetic music tracks to perform their varying functions. Where for Eisenstein the central function of such clashes was inherently political in nature, there seems little room for ideology in the *filone*'s numbers: the central tension foregrounded in these scenes is between the narrative and excess scripts which frequently vie for dominance in the soundtracks as well as the images of these films. Remarkably, such "uncertain significations" are just as fundamental to the "brutal" violence of the *filone* as the shots of explosions, beatings, shootings and mutilations that they accompany and frequently overpower.

Conclusion

In 1998, popular New York hip-hop trio The Beastie Boys released the second single from their number one album *Hello Nasty* (Capitol). Entitled *Body Movin'*, the song incorporated samples from sources as diverse as Latin jazz, 1960s American pop and even fitness training videos, and these intertextual excesses were matched by the song's foregrounding of the hip-hop genre's own excessive *miscellanea*: loud scratches on the soundtrack; bass-heavy, staccato beats; snatches of dialogue and rumbling synth lines. But it is the song's accompanying video – directed by band leader Adam Yauch – that proves most interesting, for it consists of footage of Yauch and his band members cavorting in various costumes, intercut with scenes from 1960s spy *filone* *Diabolik / Danger: Diabolik!* (Italy / France, Mario Bava, 1968). Belonging to a specific “genre” of film that typically places far greater emphasis on spectacular rather than narrative pleasures, Yauch's music video in fact provides the perfect format within which *Diabolik*'s central visual obsessions can be put on display. And displayed they are: extreme low angle shots of gothic towers; high-angle shots of centrally-framed winding staircases, car chases sped up by manipulation of the apparatus; zip pans and tilts; crash zooms showing cars skidding off cliff faces... all in fact point towards a number of similar devices that can be traced across the *filoni*. In many ways, *Body Movin'* serves as a microcosm of the paracinematic approach to films like the *filoni*, for it highlights – and valorises through parody – the most “visible” and therefore excessive aspects of *Diabolik*'s mise-en-scène. Clearly, *Diabolik* is a film whose non-conformance with established norms of narrative and whose frequent revelation of its own material identity could be construed as being “bad” or “trashy” from the standpoint of mainstream cinema. As Yauch's music video illustrates, however, it is exactly in the stylish eccentricity and formal bizarreness resulting from this non-conformance where *Diabolik*'s central pleasures lie (not to mention in the simultaneous blurring of boundaries between high and low art *musical* referents that the Beastie Boys track embodies). What matters most in *filoni* like *Diabolik* is not character, suspense or continuity, but rather the process by which cinema's inherent artificiality is laid bare by devices that explicitly address an inescapable curiosity – engendered in viewers from early cinema onwards – to witness powerful and exotic images, edits and sounds.

Having watched *Body Movin*'s music video for the first time during the final weeks of the writing-up process, two things immediately struck me. Firstly, that one of the thousands of typically low-budget popular films made within the excesses of the Italian film industry in the late 1960s should eventually find its way into such a mainstream format as a popular hip-hop promo. Secondly, and most significantly, that the way in which *Body Movin*' formed relationships between *Diabolik*'s spectacular shot sequences and its own newly-filmed *narrative* segments (the five-and-a-half-minute video loosely charts the attempts of the one of the rappers to steal a meatball recipe) was in fact analogous to the ways in which *the filoni themselves* "deal" with narrative and excess. Although the *mise-en-scène* of the video's "new" shots self-consciously attempts to integrate them with *Diabolik*'s originals, the joins between the two are still vividly clear. Furthermore, the episodic structure that inevitably results creates a distinct sense that the new narrative segments are included as a mere base for the more excessive attractions on which the video lays its greatest emphasis. What is immediately pleasurable about watching *Body Movin*' is not just the enjoyment of the spectacle provided by *Diabolik*'s "excessive" shots: it is also the enjoyment of *excess itself*, created by the spatial discontinuity existing between the two types of shot and resulting in the revelation of the apparatus and its mechanisms. How both *Body Movin*' and the *filone* "deal" with narrative and excess, quite paradoxically, is by *not dealing with them at all* and in the process highlighting a conflict between the two scripts that is typically allayed by the mainstream film.

For me, identifying and investigating this dual focus structure in the *filoni* has been one of the most valuable and exciting aspects of the research process. In the years elapsing between my initial viewing of *Zombi 2 / Zombie Flesh Eaters* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1979) and *Diabolik* (coincidentally the last film I analysed within the corpus), my approach to the *filone* has grown in scope from an examination of violent acts in the films to a far wider investigation of violence and spectacle and their place within the script of excess fundamental to the distinct pleasures that the films provide. Moreover, while my initial focus in the first years of doctoral study was firmly on the many formally-bracketed violent "numbers" that punctuate the *filoni*, a far more challenging – and ultimately rewarding – task was to go beyond my initial concept of narrative and excess as mutually-exclusive opposites to examine the ways in which excess frequently manifested itself *outside* the numbers. As Barthes and Thompson's

work suggests, excess runs as a constant undercurrent throughout cinema, and a disproportionate emphasis on excess can be traced across the *filoni*: in the joins between their scenes; in their episodic structures; in their mismatched soundtracks; in their many narrative delays; in their alignment with early cinematic attractions through the varying gestures of display in the films and, centrally, in their habitual foregrounding of the apparatus and the fictiveness of narrative. What binds the *filoni* in my corpus together most effectively is not a fascination with the American West, the mythological past, urban Italy, the undead or the black-gloved killer, but with *cinema itself* and the myriad of possibilities that its apparatus offers – within which narrative transitivity, spatio-temporal continuity and suspense are but three commonly-weakened elements.

Violence, too, became an equally challenging concept to examine across the thesis. As I noted in my introduction, my initial approach to the question of “what is it that makes the *filone* so violent?” was to suggest that the films, without fail, provided the viewer with the best view of the acts depicted. Perhaps I was “spoiled” to a certain extent by instigating my investigation of the *filone* with *Zombi 2*, for even now after over a decade it remains to me one of the most intense of the films examined. A crucial aspect of my study was therefore to reconcile the extremity of this film with the numerous *filoni* that did *not* provide the best view. As my practice of closely analysing specific scenes from the films began to inform (and become informed by) the critical perspectives I was examining, I began to realise that the answer to the question presented had less to do with exactly *which* violent acts were depicted but, centrally, *how* these acts were depicted by the films. A number of devices therefore render the violence of these films “extreme”: the emphasis on suffering, torture and similarly drawn-out events; the ubiquitous inclusion of a diegetic audience, typically shown in facial close-up to emphasise the pleasure (and displeasure) that these acts present; the recurrent theme of ocular mutilation, and the often extreme mismatches created by the soundtracks that accompany these scenes. Furthermore, that the *filone*’s use of these excessive devices only further divests them of their *narrative* importance is, upon reflection, absolutely fundamental to the accusations of “extremity”, “brutality” and “sadism” frequently levelled at the films. Violent acts in the mainstream western, gangster film and horror film may often be rendered spectacular by suspense, tension and excessive set-pieces: far more extreme, however, is the way

in which the *filoni* use these gestures of display to explicitly address the viewer's desire (whether conscious or not) to appreciate violent acts *for their aesthetic qualities alone*, not to mention their purposeful instigation of "games" which promise violence through formal bracketing mechanisms before delaying, obscuring and often looking away from the acts.

The process of broadening my original definition of "film violence" to reflect the increasingly evident ways in which the films *themselves* could create violence, by presenting the viewer with attractions and revealing the apparatus, was also fundamental to the development of my arguments. Describing the editing of a film, a camera movement, a zoom or a soundtrack as "violent" is a practice widespread throughout the writings of film reviewers and academics alike, reflecting one central assumption: everybody knows what the word "violence" means, despite the fact that it is habitually used in a number of contexts by a number of horror theorists, effects theorists, feminists, Marxists, victims of abuse, black people, white people, men and women, each of whom have their own ideological slant on the term. Although I am not forwarding Chapter Three's definition of "film violence" as a completely definitive concept that is itself immune to criticism, the fact that I have taken steps to explicitly define the term and outline the specific ways in which it has been employed throughout this thesis will, hopefully, point towards further work of greater clarity in the area of violence in cinema. Moreover, while my study of violence is limited to a specific corpus of Italian films, by taking a close textual analysis-based approach to film violence and identifying what I feel to be a number of exciting discoveries, I hope in the process to demonstrate a useful approach to violence in cinema that could be extended outwith the *filoni* and used to investigate exactly what is "violent" about *other* types of film.

Although this is by no means a thesis on "Italian cinema", I have sought throughout the study process to draw attention to a body of films that have either been completely avoided in historical accounts of Italian cinema, been briefly mentioned but only with reference to their "brutality" and "counterfeit" nature, or, in the case of the relatively small body of work dedicated to the individual cycles, been filtered primarily through the stylistic high points of Leone, Argento and Bava. In the years since I began my study of the films, a number of more measured approaches to both Italian film history

and individual cycles have begun to emerge, two key proponents of this being Mary Wood's (2005) study – the first English-language book-length study of Italian cinema to not only include but also provide a measured discussion of the cycles examined – and Koven's (2006) study of the *giallo*, which focuses on a number of films that have hitherto remained untouched by the Argento-weighted accounts that have preceded them. There is a real sense, I feel, of a growing sea change in the way with which these films are being regarded; this was made evident in June 2006 when I attended an international conference on European horror films at Manchester Metropolitan University entitled *European Nightmares*, for the range of papers given (three of which focused on the *giallo* and horror *filoni*) indicated that the study of such films was becoming a growing concern for other “scholar fans”.

There are a number of possibilities for the further examination of the *filoni* that I would like to think my own study has drawn attention to. For example, while the *giallo*, western, horror and – to a lesser extent – the peplum have been frequently engaged with by the emergent body of literature dedicated to the *filone* cycles, the comparative lack of English-language literature on the *poliziotteschi* points towards further study in this area. Of all the cycles examined it is the most “contemporary”, and sets itself up within a particular Italian social and political *milieu*, suggesting that, despite its excesses, this particular cycle is more open to thematic analysis. A more crucial area in which I would like to encourage work, however, is in the study of *gender* across the films, which remains in the margins throughout this study due to my more central preoccupation with narrative and dual focus. Work has already been done in this area, but its disproportionate emphasis on the female victims of the horror and *giallo* cycles has left two areas open for study in particular; the first being the role of women in the peplum, *poliziotteschi* and western; the three most “masculine” of the cycles. I myself have been guilty at points in the analyses of labelling the films “misogynistic” without suggesting exactly which aspects of the films create this effect, and there is definite room for further critical advances in this area. Secondly, a factor that has always struck me about the films is that they clearly beg the analysis of *masculinity* in these largely male-dominated cycles. The peplum's emphasis on the muscular male body; the *poliziotteschi* and western cycles' fragmentation of their heroes' bodies via fetishistic close-ups of their pistols, axes and eyes; the *giallo*'s frequent equation of homosexuality with rape and pederasty; the typical way in which

even heterosexual sex is sanitised and, significantly, never portrayed as spectacle, and the “buddy movie” aspects of films such as *Uomini si nasce poliziotti si muore / Live Like a Cop, Die Like a Man* (Italy, Ruggero Deodato, 1976) all open the cycles up to readings examining the homosocial, homosexual and even “camp” aspects of the films. A central question for these accounts to address, in fact, is whether Neale’s (1983) arguments on the spectacle of masculinity, which draw on Mulvey (1975) to identify shifting models of character identification and gendered looks in the mainstream films that he examines, could be productively applied to the *filoni*, where the weakening of narrative and the abandonment of character-based point-of-view seems to problematise these models.

The schism created by this in fact highlights a key factor influencing my arrival at the conclusions presented, namely the attempt to engage with Anglo-American theoretical perspectives to examine the films. Early attempts to find suitable models to engage with proved frustrating: the more I discovered new genre theories to examine, the more it became clear that a majority of them had been founded on the study of mainstream cinema and as such did not “talk” to the *filoni* in the ways that I initially expected. It took the work of Robin Wood (1986) in particular – perhaps surprising, given his very brief appearance in this study – to prompt me to evaluate these models not on the basis of whether they could accurately summarise the films from my own corpus, but by identifying which of their specific aspects could be incorporated into my *own* genre study of the *filone*. If Wood could take aspects of Marxist and Freudian theory and combine them to draw out a number of fascinating themes in films like *Dawn of the Dead* (America, George Romero, 1979) and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (USA, Tobe Hooper, 1974), I realised, then I too could take elements from different genre theories and use them productively outwith their original context. Kitses (1969) and Neale (1980) initially presented useful models of mainstream narrative that the *filoni*’s inconsistencies, which were still emerging in my study at this point, could be pitted against, but, as previous chapters illustrate, it was my discovery of the musical arguments of Altman (1978, 1989) and Mellencamp (1977), Gunning’s (1986) work on early cinema and Thompson’s (1986) work on excess that most fundamentally shaped the way I approached the films. Of course, special emphasis at this stage should also be laid on the writing of Sconce (1995), whose work on paracinema not only reflected the “mainstream comparative” approach to the

filoni that I was taking but, most fundamentally, led me to investigate cinematic excess in the first place.

The benefits of this approach were numerous, and a number of logical patterns between the films and theoretical perspectives began to emerge. My research identified the tendency to present violence as spectacle in the *filone*: the work of Kitses and Neale identified violence as key to narrative developments in the violent genres they described. I subsequently realised that violence and spectacle in the *filone* frequently threatened narrative stability: Sconce and Thompson's arguments led me to identify a tension between narrative and excess in the films. I then noticed that this tension was most evident in the *filone*'s protracted scenes of violence and spectacle: Altman and Williams (1989, whose similar approach in using theory outwith its original context I am also indebted to) provided a means of analysing these scenes as "numbers" within a dual focus model. My continuing research identified *specifically* excessive formal elements within these sequences: Gunning's discussion of similar elements led me to theorise them as attractions, while Mellencamp provided a basis on which I could create my own taxonomy of *filone* attractions.

In retrospect, developing and honing my emergent arguments in this way allowed me to get a lot more "out" of the films than I had initially expected: watching my core arguments and perspective on the films evolve was one of the most pleasurable aspects of the entire study process. Although drawing different components from different genre theories in this manner limits the possibility of making any definitive critical interventions within these discourses (this of course has never been one of my central aims), I would like to think that by demonstrating the ways in which theories can be transposed from their original national and generic contexts, this study could signal towards *further* study of cult cinema genres like the *filone*. Williams (1989) and I have used Altman's (1978) dual focus structures to illustrate, respectively, narrative oppositions between men and women and structural tensions between narrative and excess, but there remains room across the study of popular cinema to use this model in a completely different context altogether. The blaxploitation film, for example – a genre similarly marked by its visual excesses, low budgets, exploitative production context and recurrent foregrounding of (soul and funk) music on its soundtrack – could be analysed for the purely structural tensions that it exhibits, but equally

productive would be to adapt Altman's dual focus to investigate how the frequently-polarised racial, political and class conflicts between blacks and whites in these films could be articulated, commented on and / or resolved by its violent scenes and its musical numbers. Perspectives like this, I feel, provide great scope for expanding the paracinematic approach by illustrating a productive and novel means of theorising films that have been marginalised by both mainstream tastes and mainstream critical literature.

As a final theoretical consideration of the thesis, in fact, I would like to demonstrate the usefulness of adapting theories from other genres by recalling Dyer's (1977) work on the musical, and concluding my analysis with a summary that outlines the central points of my argument. Once again I intend to adapt a theory that is – like Altman's dual focus model – narrative-based, and adapt it to analogise the structural conflict between narrative and excess scripts in the *filone*. While the musical's number scenes, for Dyer, embody utopian solutions to the problems presented by its narrative, a useful perspective to take on the *filone* is to identify *excess*, figured in its violent and spectacular numbers, as the element of the films that in fact presents its *own* distinct utopian solution to the problems of its narrative. Furthermore, while numbers for Dyer deal with societal problems of scarcity, dreariness, exhaustion, manipulation and fragmentation (1977, p.26), the central narrative problem for the *filone* is *narrative itself*, and the system of continuity with which it seeks to displace excess and minimise ambiguity in the text. The arguments of the last six chapters have consistently illustrated how the *filoni* were *created* in an excessive environment, were *designed* to outdo each other's excesses, were *marketed* based on their excesses and consistently *foregrounded* these excesses in their structures. As a result, the films exhibit a recurrent disquiet with the comparative dreariness and predictability of narrative, its manipulation of space, time and causality and its scarcity of spectacle: these are problems that the *filone* can only address by temporarily *escaping* them and rendering them immaterial through the frequent shifting of focus to its excessive script. To make this clear, Figure 7.1.1 on the next page identifies the key features of both scripts in the *filone* outlining what its numbers strive to escape from and, more importantly, how it escapes from them:

Figure 7.1.1 Dual Focus in the *Filone*

| Narrative Focus | Excess Focus |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Storytelling</i> | <i>Display</i> |
| <i>Integration</i> | <i>Fragmentation</i> |
| <i>Continuity</i> | <i>Discontinuity</i> |
| <i>Suspense</i> | <i>Curiosity</i> |
| <i>Motivation</i> | <i>Superfluosity</i> |
| <i>Coherence</i> | <i>Ambiguity</i> |
| <i>Themes</i> | <i>Attractions</i> |
| <i>Narrative Pleasure</i> | <i>Visual Pleasure</i> |
| <i>Diegesis</i> | <i>Apparatus</i> |
| <i>Rules</i> | <i>Disorder</i> |
| <i>Scarcity</i> | <i>Spectacle</i> |
| <i>Immersion</i> | <i>Confrontation</i> |
| <i>Violence as Resolution</i> | <i>Extreme Violence</i> |
| <i>Endings</i> | <i>Severance</i> |

Earlier in the chapter I suggested that the *filone* and its numbers typically did not “deal” with the problems presented by narrative and excess, and this is embodied in the notion that it is habitually excess (figured in freeze-frame endings, the absence of epilogues and the deployment of final violent “surprises” to make good on the promises of the games of spectatorship played), and *not* narrative, that provides closure to the films. The frequent use of “FINE” title cards in the films foregrounds this disjuncture even further, for the question arises of what is really “finished” or “resolved” at these points in the film. And the answer is, typically, very little, which suggests that the central pleasures the *filone* provides its viewer are not just the pleasures to be gained from watching violent and spectacular acts unfold, but also the distinct pleasures arising from the rendering of these acts as *excessively* violent and *excessively* spectacular and from the subsequent revelation of cinema’s “material identity”. Formal bizarreness and stylish eccentricity may be features from which mainstream cinema typically shirks, but within a body of films that are fundamentally

based on excess it is precisely these “deviant” characteristics that are most tightly embraced, by both the *filoni* themselves and the paracinematic audience.

It seems fitting that the journey through my investigation of the *filone* portrayed in these pages should begin and end with the films that bookended it, and there is a particular moment at the end of *Diabolik* where these particular pleasures shine through. Having portrayed the robberies and criminal activities of its black catsuit-clad anti-hero, Diabolik, through a series of episodic speedboat and car chases, aerial free falls, explosions, shootouts, punch-ups, animation sequences and even moments where psychedelic dance sequences completely disrupt its (practically arbitrary) narrative, *Diabolik* reaches its resolution. Diabolik steals a number of huge blocks of gold bullion by melting them down and storing them in his underground lair: he is finally cornered by the authorities, however, who run in, firing their guns at him and blowing up the smelting equipment, covering Diabolik in molten gold. The film then cuts to show Diabolik’s corpse (encased like a statue in the hardened gold, but with his face and eyes still visible through his helmet visor), and as the policemen leave the cave Diabolik’s accomplice and girlfriend, Eva, arrives to pay her last respects. Watched by the police inspector who has been chasing the couple for the duration of the film, Eva caresses the statue longingly, and asks the inspector for a moment alone with her dead lover. As the inspector turns his back and walks away, a crash zoom into an extreme close-up of Diabolik’s face reveals him “coming to life” and winking at her; revealing that he, in fact, has been faking his death all along. The pleasure provided by this shock is a decidedly narrative one, and is reinforced by the coherent spatial relations that are established by the eyeline match and reverse shots between Eva (looking left) and Diabolik (looking right).

If its narrative script was the most important influence on *Diabolik* at this stage, the film could quite effectively end now: such “shock” narrative endings – the similar “reincarnation” that closes *Carrie* (USA, Brian de Palma, 1976) springs to mind – involve suspense, and create pleasure by quickly reconfiguring major plot points at the eleventh hour. But *Diabolik*, of course, is far more obsessed with its excessive script: as a *filone*, the film simply *cannot* end without playing one last game with its viewer and, in the process, highlighting the dreariness and exhaustion of narrative. As the inspector returns to examine the body, another facial close-up reveals Diabolik’s

face to be as emotionless and “dead” as it was before, and both the inspector and Eva walk away, drawing the narrative to a close. Yet even after the diegetic audience have turned their backs on the spectacle of Diabolik’s centrally-framed and gold-encased head, *Diabolik* has one more viewer left to address. As the close-up of his face continues and the film’s funky guitar-led musical theme fades in on the soundtrack, he quickly looks around before gazing *directly at the camera* and winking at it, an action that is rendered even more excessive by the crash zoom into his eye accompanying it. The film cuts to a final re-establishing shot of the empty cave, the sonic spectacle of amplified, echoing cackles then fades in, the screen fades to black, and it is only then when the title “THE END” can be finally displayed, highlighting what I feel to be the most crucial of the many discoveries made in the twelve years since my first encounter with *Zombi 2*. What is most remarkable about these films, and why they continue to fascinate not only myself but cult film fans, film theorists and even hip-hop groups, is that the diegetic and typically “brutal” acts of eyes being poked out and winking are accompanied by far more significant pokes and winks at *us*, creating an “uncertain signification” that transcends the boundaries of space, time and narrative coherence.

Appendix A: Core Corpus of Study

1. *2019: Dopo la caduta di New York / 2019: After the Fall of New York* (Italy / France, Sergio Martino, 1983)
2. *Apocalypse domani / Cannibal Apocalypse* (Italy / Spain, Antonio Margheriti, 1980)
3. *La belva col mitra / Beast With a Gun* (Italy, Sergio Grieco, 1977)
4. *La casa sperduta nel parco / House on the Edge of the Park* (Italy, Ruggero Deodato, 1980)
5. *Cannibal Ferox* (Italy, Umberto Lenzi 1980)
6. *Cannibal Holocaust* (Italy, Ruggero Deodato, 1980)
7. *Chi l'ha vista morire / Who Saw Her Die?* (Italy, Aldo Lado, 1972)
8. *Il cinico l'infame il violento / The Cynic, the Rat and the Fist* (Italy, Umberto Lenzi, 1977)
9. *Contamination* (Italy, Luigi Cozzi, 1980)
10. *I corpi presentato tracce di violenza carnale / Torso* (Italy, Sergio Martino, (1973)
11. *Dèmoni / Demons* (Italy, Lamberto Bava, 1985)
12. *Diabolik / Danger: Diabolik!* (Italy / France, Mario Bava, 1968)
13. *Django* (Italy / Spain, Sergio Corbucci, 1966)
14. *Django il bastardo / Django the Bastard* (Italy, Sergio Garrone, 1974)
15. *Le fatiche di Ercole / Hercules* (Italy / Spain, Pietro Francisci, 1958)
16. *Il grande silenzio / The Big Silence* (Italy / France, Sergio Corbucci, 1968)
17. *I guerri dell'anno 2072 / Rome 2033 – The Fighter Centurions* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1984)
18. *Incubo sulla città contaminata / Nightmare City* (Italy / Mexico / Spain, Umberto Lenzi, 1980)
19. *Johnny Oro / Ringo and his Golden Pistol* (Italy, Sergio Corbucci, 1966)
20. *Keoma* (Italy, Enzo Girolami 1976)
21. *Lager SSadis Kastrat Kommandantur / SS Experiment Camp* (Italy, Sergio Garrone, 1976)
22. *Luca il contrabbandiere / The Naples Connection* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1980)
23. *Maciste e la regina di Samar / Hercules Against the Moon Men* (Italy / France, Giacomo Gentilomo, 1964)

24. *Malastrana / Short Night of the Glass Dolls* (Italy / West Germany / Yugoslavia, Aldo Lado, 1971)
25. *Manhattan Baby* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1982)
26. *Mannaja / A Man Called Blade* (Italy, Sergio Martino, 1977)
27. *La maschera del demonio / Black Sunday* (Italy, Mario Bava, 1960)
28. *Milano calibre 9 / Calibre 9* (Italy, Fernando Di Leo, 1972)
29. *Milano trema – la polizia vuole giustizia / Violent Professionals* (Italy, Sergio Martino, 1973)
30. *Il mio nome è Shanghai Joe / My Name is Shanghai Joe* (Italy, Mario Caiano, 1972)
31. *Napoli violenta* (Italy, Umberto Lenzi, 1976)
32. *Non si sevizia un paperino / Don't Torture a Duckling* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1978)
33. *I nuovi barbari / The New Barbarians* (Italy / USA, Enzo Girolami, 1982)
34. *Paura nella città dei morti viventi / City of the Living Dead* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1980)
35. *Per un pugno di dollari / A Fistful of Dollars* (Italy / Spain, Sergio Leone, 1964)
36. *Phenomena* (Italy, Dario Argento, 1985)
37. *Profondo Rosso / Deep Red* (Italy, Dario Argento, 1975)
38. *Quién sabe? / A Bullet for the General* (Italy, Damiano Damiani, 1966)
39. *Roma a mano armata / Rome, Armed to the Teeth* (Italy, Umberto Lenzi, 1976)
40. *Se sei vivo, spara! / Django, Kill...If you Live, Shoot!* (Spain / Italy, Giulio Questi, 1967)
41. *Sette contro tutti / Seven Rebel Gladiators* (Italy, Michele Lupo, 1965)
42. *Solamente Nero / The Blood Stained Shadow* (Italy, Antonio Bido, 1978)
43. *Lo squartatore di New York / New York Ripper* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1982)
44. *L'uccello dalle piume di cristallo / The Bird with the Crystal Plumage* (Italy / West Germany, Dario Argento, 1970)
45. *L'ultimo squalo / The Last Shark* (Italy, Enzo Girolami, 1981)
46. *Teseo contro il minotauro / The Minotaur* (Italy, Silvio Amadio, 1961)
47. *Uomini si nasce poliziotti si muore / Live Like a Cop, Die Like a Man* (Italy, Ruggero Deodato, 1976)

48. *La vendetta di Ercole / Goliath and the Dragon* (Italy / France, Vittorio Cottafavi, 1960)
49. *Virus / Hell of the Living Dead* (Italy, Bruno Mattei, 1981)
50. *Zombi 2 / Zombie Flesh Eaters* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1979)

Appendix B: *Filoni* Examined for Study

Pepla

- *Cabiria* (Italy, Giovanni Pastrone, 1914)
- *Ercole e la regina di Lidia / Hercules Unchained* (Italy / France / Spain, Pietro Francisci, 1959)
- *Gli invincibili dieci gladiatori / Spartacus and the Ten Gladiators* (Italy / France / Spain, Nick Nostro, 1964)
- *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompeii / The Last Days of Pompeii* (Italy, Mario Casterino / Eleuterio Rodolfi, 1913)
- *Il Gladiatore invincibile / The Invincible Gladiator* (Italy / Spain, Alberto De Martino and Antonio Momplet, 1962)
- *Il Magnifico gladiatore / The magnificent Gladiator* (Italy, Alfonso Brescia, 1964)
- *L'invincibile cavaliere mascherato / The Invincible Masked Rider* (Italy, Umberto Lenzi, 1963)
- *L'ultimo dei Vikinghi / The Last of the Vikings* (Italy / France, Giacomo Gentilomo, 1961)
- *La vendetta di Ercole / Goliath and the Dragon* (Italy / France, Vittorio Cottafavi, 1960)
- *Le fatiche di Ercole / Hercules* (Italy / Spain, Pietro Francisci, 1958)
- *Maciste all'inferno / Maciste in Hell* (Italy, Riccardo Freda, 1962)
- *Maciste contro i mostri / Colossus of the Stone Age* (Italy, Guido Malatesta, 1962)
- *Maciste e la regina di Samar / Hercules Against the Moon Men* (Italy / France, Giacomo Gentilomo, 1964)
- *Maciste, l'uomo più forte del mondo / The Strongest Man in the World* (Italy, Antonio Leonviola, 1961)
- *Quo Vadis?* (Italy, Enrico Guazzoni, 1912)
- *Sette contro tutti / Seven Rebel Gladiators* (Italy, Michele Lupo, 1965)
- *Teseo contro il minotauro / The Minotaur* (Italy, Silvio Amadio, 1961)

Westerns

- *All'ombra di una colt / In a Colt's Shadow* (Italy / Spain, Giovanni Grimaldi, 1965)
- *C'era una volta il west / Once Upon a Time in the West* (Italy / USA, Sergio Leone, 1968)
- *Da uomo a uomo / Death Rides a Horse* (Italy, Giulio Petroni, 1967)
- *Django* (Italy / Spain, Sergio Corbucci, 1966)
- *Django 2: il grande ritorno / Django Strikes Again* (Italy, Nello Rossati, 1987)
- *Django il bastardo / Django the Bastard* (Italy, Sergio Garrone, 1974)
- *E Dio disse a Caino / And God said to Cain* (Italy, West Germany, Antonio Margheriti, 1970)
- *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo / The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (Italy / Spain, Sergio Leone, 1966)
- *Il grande duello / The Grand Duel* (Italy / France / West Germany / Monaco, Giancarlo Santi, 1972)
- *Il grande silenzio / The Big Silence* (Italy / France, Sergio Corbucci, 1968)
- *Il mio nome e' Nessuno / My Name is Nobody* (Italy / France / Germany, Sergio Leone, 1973)
- *Johnny Oro / Ringo and his Golden Pistol* (Italy, Sergio Corbucci, 1966)
- *Johnny West il mancino / Left-handed Johnny West* (Italy / Spain / France, Gianfranco Parolini, 1965)
- *Johnny Yuma* (Italy, Romolo Guerrieri, 1966)
- *Keoma* (Italy, Enzo Girolami 1976)
- *La resa dei conti / The Big Gundown* (Italy / Spain, Sergio Sollima, 1966)
- *Le colt cantarono a morte e fu / Massacre Time* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1966)
- *Lo chiamavano Trinità / My Name is Trinity* (Italy, Enzo Barboni, 1970)
- *Mannaja / A Man Called Blade* (Italy, Sergio Martino, 1977)
- *Minnesota Clay* (Italy / Spain / France, Sergio Corbucci, 1964)
- *Per qualche dollaro in piu' / For a Few Dollars More* (Italy / Spain / West Germany / Monaco, Sergio Leone, 1965)
- *Per un pugno di dollari / A Fistful of Dollars* (Italy / Spain, Sergio Leone, 1964)
- *Pochi dollari per Django / Some Dollars for Django* (Italy / Spain, León Klimovsky, 1966)

- *Quién sabe? / A Bullet for the General* (Italy, Damiano Damiani, 1966)
- *Se incontri Sartana prega per la tua morte / If You Meet Sartana, Pray for Your Death!* (Italy / France / West Germany, Gianfranco Parolini, 1968)
- *Se sei vivo, spara! / Django, Kill...If you Live, Shoot!* (Spain / Italy, Giulio Questi, 1967)
- *Sette pistole per i MacGregor / Seven Guns for the MacGregors* (Italy / Spain, Franco Giraldi, 1966)
- *Uni pistola per Ringo / A Pistol for Ringo* (Italy / Spain, Duccio Tessari, 1965)
- *Vado... l'ammazzo e torno / Any Gun Can Play* (Italy, Enzo Girolami, 1967)

Gialli

- *Cosa avete fatto a Solange / What Have You Done to Solange?* (Italy / West Germany, Massimo Dallamano, 1972)
- *Chi l'ha vista morire / Who Saw Her Die?* (Italy, Aldo Lado, 1972)
- *Giallo a venezia / Mystery in Venice* (Italy, Mario Landi, 1979)
- *I corpi presentato trace di violenza carnale / Torso* (Italy, Sergio Martino, (1973)
- *Il gatto a nove code / Cat O'Nine Tails* (Italy / France / West Germany, Dario Argento, 1971)
- *L'occhio nel labirinto / The Eye in the Labyrinth* (Italy / West Germany, Mario Caiano, 1972)
- *L'uccello dalle piume di cristallo / The Bird with the Crystal Plumage* (Italy / West Germany, Dario Argento, 1970)
- *L'ultimo treno della notte / Night Train Murders* (Italy, Aldo Lado, 1975)
- *La casa dalle finestre che ridono / The House of the Laughing Windows* (Italy, Pupi Avati, 1976)
- *La casa sperduta nel parco / House on the Edge of the Park* (Italy, Ruggero Deodato, 1980)
- *La coda dello scorpione / Case of the Scorpion's Tail* (Spain / Italy, Sergio Martino, 1971)
- *La ragazza che sapeva troppo / The Girl Who Knew Too Much* (Italy, Mario Bava, 1963)
- *Lo squartatore di New York / New York Ripper* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1982)

- *Lo strano vizio della Signora Ward / Blade of the Ripper* (Spain / Italy, Sergio Martino, 1971)
- *Malastrana / Short Night of the Glass Dolls* (Italy / West Germany / Yugoslavia, Aldo Lado, 1971)
- *Non si sevizia un paperino / Don't Torture a Duckling* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1978)
- *Profondo Rosso / Deep Red* (Italy, Dario Argento, 1975)
- *Quattro Mosche di velluto grigio / Four Flies on Grey Velvet* (Italy / France, Dario Argento, 1971)
- *Rivelazioni di un maniaco sessuale al capo della squadra mobile / So Sweet So Dead* (Italy, Roberto Bianchi Montero, 1972)
- *Sei donne per l'assassino / Blood and Black Lace* (Italy, Mario Bava, 1964)
- *Solamente Nero / The Blood Stained Shadow* (Italy, Antonio Bido, 1978)
- *Tenebre* (Italy, Dario Argento, 1982)
- *Una sull'altra / One on Top of the Other* (Italy / Spain / France, Lucio Fulci, 1969)

Poliziotteschi

- *Confessione di un commissario di polizia al procuratore della repubblica / Confessions of a Police Captain* (Italy, Damiano Damiani, 1971)
- *Il Boss / The Boss* (Italy, Fernando Di Leo 1973)
- *Il cinico l'infame il violento / The Cynic, the Rat and the Fist* (Italy, Umberto Lenzi, 1977)
- *Il grande racket / The Big Racket* (Italy, Enzo Girolami, 1976)
- *Il padroni della città / Mister Scarface* (Italy / West Germany, Fernando Di Leo, 1977)
- *Il Trucido e lo sbirro / Tough Cop* (Italy, Umberto Lenzi, 1976)
- *La belva col mitra / Beast With a Gun* (Italy, Sergio Grieco, 1977)
- *La legge violenta della squadra anticrimine / Cross Shot* (Italy, Stelvio Massi, 1976)
- *La polizia ha le mani legate / Killer Cop* (Italy, Luciano Ercoli, 1974)
- *La polizia incrimina la legge assolve / High Crime* (Italy, Enzo Girolami, 1973)
- *La polizia ringrazia / Execution Squad* (Italy, Stefano Vanzina, 1972)

- *Luca il contrabbandiere / The Naples Connection* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1980)
- *Milano calibre 9 / Calibre 9* (Italy, Fernando di Leo, 1972)
- *Milano trema – la polizia vuole giustizia / Violent Professionals* (Italy, Sergio Martino, 1973)
- *Napoli si rubella / A Man Called Magnum* (Italy, Michele Massimo Tarantini, 1977)
- *Napoli violenta* (Italy, Umberto Lenzi, 1976)
- *Paura in città / Fear in the City* (Italy, Giuseppe Rosati, 1976)
- *Poliziotto senza paura / Magnum Cop* (Italy / Austria, Stelvio Massi, 1977)
- *Roma a mano armata / Rome, Armed to the Teeth* (Italy, Umberto Lenzi, 1976)
- *Una magnum speciale per Tony Saitta / Blazing Magnum* (Italy / Canada / Panama, Alberto De Martino, 1976)
- *Uomini si nasce poliziotti si muore / Live Like a Cop, Die Like a Man* (Italy, Ruggero Deodato, 1976)

Horror Films

- *Amanti d'oltretomba / Nightmare Castle* (Italy, Mario Caiano, 1965)
- *Antropofagus / Anthropophagous: the Beast* (Italy, Joe D'Amato, 1980)
- *Apocalypse domani / Cannibal Apocalypse* (Italy / Spain, Antonio Margheriti, 1980)
- *Assassinio al cimitero etrusco / Murders in the Etruscan Cemetary* (Italy / France, Sergio Martino, 1982)
- *Chi Sei? / Beyond the Door* (Italy, Ovido G. Assonitis / Robert Barrett, 1974)
- *Cinque tombe per un medium / Terror Creatures from the Grave* (Italy, Mario Pupillo, 1965)
- *Dèmoni / Demons* (Italy, Lamberto Bava, 1985)
- *Dèmoni 2 / Demons 2* (Italy, Lamberto Bava, 1986)
- *I Tre volti della paura / Black Sabbath* (Italy / France / USA, Mario Bava and Salvatore Billitteri, 1963)
- *I vampiri / Lust of the Vampire* (Italy, Riccardo Freda, 1957)
- *Incubo sulla città contaminata / Nightmare City* (Italy / Mexico / Spain, Umberto Lenzi, 1980)

- *Inferno* (Italy, Dario Argento, 1980)
- *L'aldilà / The Beyond* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1981)
- *L'anticristo / The Antichrist* (Italy, Alberto de Martino, 1974)
- *L'orribile segreto del Dr. Hichcock / The Horrible Dr. Hichcock* (Italy, Riccardo Freda, 1962)
- *L'ossessa / The Sexorcist* (Italy, Mario Gariazzo, 1974)
- *L'ultima orgia del III Reich / The Gestapo's Last Orgy* (Italy, Cesare Canevari, 1977)
- *L'ultimo squalo / Great White* (Italy, Enzo Girolami, 1981)
- *La maschera del demonio / Black Sunday* (Italy, Mario Bava, 1960)
- *La Ragazza che sapeva troppo / The Evil Eye* (Italy, Mario Bava, 1963)
- *La setta / The Sect* (Italy, Michele Soavi, 1991)
- *Manhattan Baby* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1982)
- *Opera* (Italy, Dario Argento, 1987)
- *Operazione paura / Kill, Baby, Kill* (Italy, Mario Bava, 1966)
- *Paura nella città dei morti viventi / City of the Living Dead* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1980)
- *Phenomena* (Italy, Dario Argento, 1985)
- *Quella villa accanto al cimitero / The House by the Cemetery* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1981)
- *Suspiria* (Italy, Dario Argento, 1977)
- *Troll 2* (Italy, Claudio Fragasso, 1990)
- *Virus / Hell of the Living Dead* (Italy, Bruno Mattei, 1981)
- *Zombi 2 / Zombie Flesh Eaters* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1979)
- *Zombi 3: Le notti del terrore / Zombie 3: Nights of Terror* (Italy, Andrea Bianchi, 1981)
- *Zombi holocaust / Zombie 3* (Italy, Marino Girolami, 1980)

Minor Filoni

- *1990: I guerri del Bronx / 1990: The Bronx Warrior* (Italy, Enzo Girolami, 1982)
Post-apocalyptic science-fiction film
- *2019: Dopo la caduta di New York / 2019: After the Fall of New York* (Italy / France, Sergio Martino, 1983) Post-apocalyptic science-fiction film
- *Agente 077 missione Bloody Mary / Agent 077 – Mission Bloody Mary* (Italy / Spain / France, Sergio Grieco, 1965) Spy film
- *Alien 2 sulla terra / Alien 2* (Italy, Ciro Ippolito, 1980) Science-fiction film
- *Cannibal Ferox* (Italy, Umberto Lenzi 1980) Cannibal *mondo* film
- *Cannibal Holocaust* (Italy, Ruggero Deodato, 1980) Cannibal *mondo* film
- *Contamination* (Italy, Luigi Cozzi, 1980) Science-fiction film
- *Cugini carnali / High School Girl* (Italy, Sergio Martino, 1974) Sex comedy
- *Diabolik / Danger: Diabolik!* (Italy / France, Mario Bava, 1968) Spy film
- *Gunan il guerriero / The Invincible Barbarian* (Italy, Franco Prosperi, 1982)
Fantasy film
- *Holocausto porno / Porno Holocaust* (Italy, Joe D'Amato, 1981) Porn / horror film
- *I guerri dell'anno 2072 / Rome 2033 – The Fighter Centurions* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1984) Post-apocalyptic science-fiction film
- *I nuovi barbari / The New Barbarians* (Italy / USA, Enzo Girolami, 1982) Post-apocalyptic science-fiction film
- *Il mio nome è Shanghai Joe / My Name is Shanghai Joe* (Italy, Mario Caiano, 1972) Kung-fu western
- *Il paese del sesso selvaggio / Deep River Savages* (Italy, Umberto Lenzi, 1972)
Cannibal *mondo* film
- *L'ultimo squalo / The Last Shark* (Italy, Enzo Girolami, 1981) Shark attack film
- *La bestia in calore / The Beast in Heat* (Italy, Luigi Batzella, 1977)
“Nazisploitation” film
- *La conquista / Conquest* (Italy / Spain / Mexico, Lucio Fulci, 1983) Fantasy film
- *La Montagna del dio cannibale / Prisoner of the Cannibal God* (Italy, Sergio Martino, 1978) Cannibal *Mondo* film
- *Lager SSadis Kastrat Kommandantur / SS Experiment Camp* (Italy, Sergio Garrone, 1976) “Nazisploitation” film

- *Mille peccati...nessuna virtù / Mondo Sex* (Italy, Sergio Martino, 1969) *Mondo* film
- *Mondo Cane* (Italy, Paulo Cavara / Gualtiero Jacopetti, 1962) *Mondo* film
- *Suor Omicidi / The Killer Nun* (Italy, Giulio Berruti, 1978) “Nunsplotation” film
- *Thor il conquistatore / Thor the Conqueror* (Italy, Tonino Ricci, 1983) Fantasy film

Filmography

- *1990: I guerri del Bronx / 1990: The Bronx Warrior* (Italy, Enzo Girolami, 1982)
- *2019: Dopo la caduta di New York / 2019: After the Fall of New York* (Italy / France, Sergio Martino, 1983)
- *A Man Called Horse* (USA, Elliot Silverstein, 1970)
- *A Man Called Sledge* (USA, Vic Morrow, 1970)
- *Africa Addio / Africa – Blood and Guts* (Italy, Gualtiero Jacopetti, 1963)
- *Agente 077 missione Bloody Mary / Agent 077 – Mission Bloody Mary* (Italy / Spain / France, Sergio Grieco, 1965)
- *Alien* (UK / USA, Ridley Scott, 1979)
- *Alien 2 sulla terra / Alien 2* (Italy, Ciro Ippolito, 1980)
- *All'ombra di una colt / In a Colt's Shadow* (Italy / Spain, Giovanni Grimaldi, 1965)
- *Amanti d'oltretomba / Nightmare Castle* (Italy, Mario Caiano, 1965)
- *Antropofagus / Anthropophagous: the Beast* (Italy, Joe D'Amato, 1980)
- *Apocalypse domani / Cannibal Apocalypse* (Italy / Spain, Antonio Margheriti, 1980)
- *Assassinio al cimitero etrusco / Murders in the Etruscan Cemetary* (Italy / France, Sergio Martino, 1982)
- *Banditi a Milano / Bandits in Milan* (Italy, Carlo Lizzani, 1968)
- *Beatrice Cenci* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1969)
- *Ben Hur* (USA, William Wyler, 1959)
- *Body Movin'* (USA, Adam Yauch, 1998)
- *Bonnie and Clyde* (USA, Arthur Penn, 1967)
- *Buffalo Bill, l'eroe del far west / Buffalo Bill* (Italy / France / West Germany, Mario Costa, 1965)
- *Bullitt* (USA, Peter Yates, 1969)
- *C'era una volta il west / Once Upon a Time in the West* (Italy / USA, Sergio Leone, 1968)
- *Cabiria* (Italy, Giovanni Pastrone, 1914)
- *Cannibal Ferox* (Italy, Umberto Lenzi 1980)
- *Cannibal Holocaust* (Italy, Ruggero Deodato, 1980)
- *Carrie* (USA, Brian de Palma, 1976)

- *Chi l'ha vista morire / Who Saw Her Die?* (Italy, Aldo Lado, 1972)
- *Chi Sei? / Beyond the Door* (Italy, Ovido G. Assonitis / Robert Barrett, 1974)
- *Cinque tombe per un medium / Terror Creatures from the Grave* (Italy, Mario Pupillo, 1965)
- *Conan the Barbarian* (USA, John Milius, 1982)
- *Confessione di un commissario di polizia al procuratore della repubblica / Confessions of a Police Captain* (Italy, Damiano Damiani, 1971)
- *Contamination* (Italy, Luigi Cozzi, 1980)
- *Cugini carnali / High School Girl* (Italy, Sergio Martino, 1974)
- *Da uomo a uomo / Death Rides a Horse* (Italy, Giulio Petroni, 1967)
- *Dawn of the Dead* (America, George Romero, 1979)
- *Dèmoni / Demons* (Italy, Lamberto Bava, 1985)
- *Dèmoni 2 / Demons 2* (Italy, Lamberto Bava, 1986)
- *Diabolik / Danger: Diabolik!* (Italy / France, Mario Bava, 1968)
- *Dirty Harry* (USA, Don Siegel, 1971)
- *Django* (Italy / Spain, Sergio Corbucci, 1966)
- *Django 2: il grande ritorno / Django Strikes Again* (Italy, Nello Rossati, 1987)
- *Django il bastardo / Django the Bastard* (Italy, Sergio Garrone, 1974)
- *Doctor No* (UK, Terence Young, 1962)
- *Dracula* (UK, Terence Fisher, 1958)
- *Dressed to Kill* (USA, Brian de Palma, 1980)
- *E Dio disse a Caino/ And God said to Cain* (Italy, West Germany, Antonio Margheriti, 1970)
- *Ercole e la regina di Lidia / Hercules Unchained* (Italy / France / Spain, Pietro Francisci, 1959)
- *Escape from New York* (USA, John Carpenter, 1981)
- *Friday the 13th* (USA, Sean Cunningham, 1980)
- *Giallo a Venezia / Mystery in Venice* (Italy, Mario Landi, 1979)
- *Gli invincibili dieci gladiatori / Spartacus and the Ten Gladiators* (Italy / France / Spain, Nick Nostro, 1964)
- *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompeii / The Last Days of Pompeii* (Italy, Mario Casterino / Eleuterio Rodolfi, 1913)
- *Glissements Progressifs du Plaisir / Successive Slidings of Pleasure* (France, Alain Robbe-Grillet, 1974)

- *Goodfellas* (USA, Martin Scorsese, 1990)
- *Gunan il guerriero / The Invincible Barbarian* (Italy, Franco Prosperi, 1982)
- *Halloween* (USA, John Carpenter, 1978)
- *High Noon* (USA, Fred Zinnemann, 1952)
- *Holocausto porno / Porno Holocaust* (Italy, Joe D'Amato, 1981)
- *I corpi presentato trace di violenza carnale / Torso* (Italy, Sergio Martino, (1973)
- *I guerri dell'anno 2072 / Rome 2033 – The Fighter Centurions* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1984)
- *I Know What You Did Last Summer* (USA, Jim Gillespie, 1997)
- *I nuovi barbari / The New Barbarians* (Italy / USA, Enzo Girolami, 1982)
- *I Tre volti della paura / Black Sabbath* (Italy / France / USA, Mario Bava and Salvatore Billitteri, 1963)
- *I vampiri / Lust of the Vampire* (Italy, Riccardo Freda, 1957)
- *Il Boss / The Boss* (Italy, Fernando Di Leo 1973)
- *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo / The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (Italy / Spain, Sergio Leone, 1966)
- *Il cinico l'infame il violento / The Cynic, the Rat and the Fist* (Italy, Umberto Lenzi, 1977)
- *Il gatto a nove code / Cat O'Nine Tails* (Italy / France / West Germany, Dario Argento, 1971)
- *Il Gladiatore invincibile / The Invincible Gladiator* (Italy / Spain, Alberto De Martino and Antonio Momplet, 1962)
- *Il grande duello / The Grand Duel* (Italy / France / West Germany / Monaco, Giancarlo Santi, 1972)
- *Il grande racket / The Big Racket* (Italy, Enzo Girolami, 1976)
- *Il grande silenzio / The Big Silence* (Italy / France, Sergio Corbucci, 1968)
- *Il Magnifico gladiatore / The magnificent Gladiator* (Italy, Alfonso Brescia, 1964)
- *Il mio nome è Shanghai Joe / My Name is Shanghai Joe* (Italy, Mario Caiano, 1972)
- *Il mio nome e' Nessuno / My Name is Nobody* (Italy / France / Germany, Sergio Leone, 1973)
- *Il padroni della città / Mister Scarface* (Italy / West Germany, Fernando Di Leo, 1977)

- *Il paese del sesso selvaggio / Deep River Savages* (Italy, Umberto Lenzi, 1972)
- *Il Trucido e lo sbirro / Tough Cop* (Italy, Umberto Lenzi, 1976)
- *Ilsa, She-Wolf of the S.S* (USA / West Germany, Don Edmonds, 1975)
- *Incubo sulla città contaminata / Nightmare City* (Italy / Mexico / Spain, Umberto Lenzi, 1980)
- *Inferno* (Italy, Dario Argento, 1980)
- *Ivan the Terrible* (USSR, Sergei Eisenstein, 1944)
- *Jaws* (USA, Steven Spielberg, 1975)
- *Johnny Oro / Ringo and his Golden Pistol* (Italy, Sergio Corbucci, 1966)
- *Johnny West il mancino / Left-handed Johnny West* (Italy / Spain / France, Gianfranco Parolini, 1965)
- *Johnny Yuma* (Italy, Romolo Guerrieri, 1966)
- *Keoma* (Italy, Enzo Girolami 1976)
- *L'aldilà / The Beyond* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1981)
- *L'anticristo / The Antichrist* (Italy, Alberto de Martino, 1974)
- *L'invincibile cavaliere mascherato / The Invincible Masked Rider* (Italy, Umberto Lenzi, 1963)
- *L'occhio nel labirinto / The Eye in the Labyrinth* (Italy / West Germany, Mario Caiano, 1972)
- *L'orribile segreto del Dr. Hichcock / The Horrible Dr. Hichcock* (Italy, Riccardo Freda, 1962)
- *L'ossessa / The Sexorcist* (Italy, Mario Gariazzo, 1974)
- *L'uccello dalle piume di cristallo / The Bird with the Crystal Plumage* (Italy / West Germany, Dario Argento, 1970)
- *L'ultima orgia del III Reich / The Gestapo's Last Orgy* (Cesare Canavare, 1977)
- *L'ultimo dei Vikinghi / The Last of the Vikings* (Italy / France, Giacomo Gentilomo, 1961)
- *L'ultimo squalo / The Last Shark* (Italy, Enzo Girolami, 1981)
- *L'ultimo treno della notte / Night Train Murders* (Italy, Aldo Lado, 1975)
- *La Battaglia di Maratona / The Giant of Marathon* (Italy / France, Jacques Tourneur, 1959),
- *La belva col mitra / Beast With a Gun* (Italy, Sergio Grieco, 1977)
- *La bestia in calore / The Beast in Heat* (Italy, Luigi Batzella, 1977)

- *La casa dalle finestre che ridono / The House of the Laughing Windows* (Italy, Pupi Avati, 1976)
- *La casa sperduta nel parco / House on the Edge of the Park* (Italy, Ruggero Deodato, 1980)
- *La coda dello scorpione / Case of the Scorpion's Tail* (Spain / Italy, Sergio Martino, 1971)
- *La conquista / Conquest* (Italy / Spain / Mexico, Lucio Fulci, 1983) Fantasy film
- *La dolce vita* (Italy, Federico Fellini, 1960)
- *La legge dei gangsters / Gangster's Law* (Italy, Siro Marcellini, 1969)
- *La legge violenta della squadra anticrimine / Cross Shot* (Italy, Stelvio Massi, 1976)
- *La maschera del demonio / Black Sunday* (Italy, Mario Bava, 1960)
- *La montagna del dio cannibale / Prisoner of the Cannibal God* (Italy, Sergio Martino, 1978)
- *La polizia ha le mani legate / Killer Cop* (Italy, Luciano Ercoli, 1974)
- *La polizia incrimina la legge assolve / High Crime* (Italy, Enzo Girolami, 1973)
- *La polizia ringrazia / Execution Squad* (Italy, Stefano Vanzina, 1972)
- *La ragazza che sapeva troppo / The Evil Eye* (Italy, Mario Bava, 1963)
- *La ragazza che sapeva troppo / The Girl Who Knew Too Much* (Italy, Mario Bava, 1963)
- *La resa dei conti / The Big Gundown* (Italy / Spain, Sergio Sollima, 1966)
- *La vendetta di Ercole / Goliath and the Dragon* (Italy / France, Vittorio Cottafavi, 1960)
- *Ladri di biciclette / Bicycle Thieves* (Italy, Vittorio de Sica, 1948)
- *Lager SSadis Kastrat Kommandantur / SS Experiment Camp* (Italy, Sergio Garrone, 1976)
- *Le colt cantarono a morte e fu / Massacre Time* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1966)
- *Le fatiche di Ercole / Hercules* (Italy / Spain, Pietro Francisci, 1958)
- *Le schiave esistono ancora / Slave Trade in the World Today* (Italy, Maleno Malenotti, 1964)
- *Lo chiamavano Trinità / My Name is Trinity* (Italy, Enzo Barboni, 1970)
- *Lo squartatore di New York / New York Ripper* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1982)
- *Lo strano vizio della Signora Ward / Blade of the Ripper* (Spain / Italy, Sergio Martino, 1971)

- *Luca il contrabbandiere / The Naples Connection* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1980)
- *Maciste all'inferno / Maciste in Hell* (Italy, Riccardo Freda, 1962)
- *Maciste contro i mostri / Colossus of the Stone Age* (Italy, Guido Malatesta, 1962)
- *Maciste e la regina di Samar / Hercules Against the Moon Men* (Italy / France, Giacomo Gentilomo, 1964)
- *Maciste, l'uomo più forte del mondo / The Strongest Man in the World* (Italy, Antonio Leonviola, 1961)
- *Mad Max* (Australia, George Miller, 1979)
- *Malastrana / Short Night of the Glass Dolls* (Italy / West Germany / Yugoslavia, Aldo Lado, 1971)
- *Manhattan Baby* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1982)
- *Mannaja / A Man Called Blade* (Italy, Sergio Martino, 1977)
- *Milano calibre 9 / Calibre 9* (Italy, Fernando di Leo, 1972)
- *Milano trema – la polizia vuole giustizia / Violent Professionals* (Italy, Sergio Martino, 1973)
- *Mille peccati...nessuna virtù / Mondo Sex* (Italy, Sergio Martino, 1969)
- *Minnesota Clay* (Italy / Spain / France, Sergio Corbucci, 1964)
- *Mondo Cane* (Italy, Paulo Cavara / Gualtiero Jacopetti, 1962)
- *Napoli si rubella / A Man Called Magnum* (Italy, Michele Massimo Tarantini, 1977)
- *Napoli violenta* (Italy, Umberto Lenzi, 1976)
- *Non si sevizia un paperino / Don't Torture a Duckling* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1978)
- *Opera* (Italy, Dario Argento, 1987)
- *Operazione paura / Kill, Baby, Kill* (Italy, Mario Bava, 1966)
- *Ossessione / Obsession* (Italy, Luchino Visconti, 1942)
- *Paura in città / Fear in the City* (Italy, Giuseppe Rosati, 1976)
- *Paura nella città dei morti viventi / City of the Living Dead* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1980)
- *Peeping Tom* (UK, Michael Powell, 1960)
- *Per qualche dollaro in piu / For a Few Dollars More* (Italy / Spain / West Germany / Monaco, Sergio Leone, 1965)
- *Per un pugno di dollari / A Fistful of Dollars* (Italy / Spain, Sergio Leone, 1964)
- *Phenomena* (Italy, Dario Argento, 1985)

- *Pochi dollari per Django / Some Dollars for Django* (Italy / Spain, León Klimovsky, 1966)
- *Poliziotto senza paura / Magnum Cop* (Italy / Austria, Stelvio Massi, 1977)
- *Profondo Rosso / Deep Red* (Italy, Dario Argento, 1975)
- *Psycho* (USA, Alfred Hitchcock, 1960)
- *Quattro Mosche di velluto grigio / Four Flies on Grey Velvet* (Italy / France, Dario Argento, 1971)
- *Quella villa accanto al cimitero / The House by the Cemetary* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1981)
- *Quién sabe? / A Bullet for the General* (Italy, Damiano Damiani, 1966)
- *Quo Vadis* (USA, Mervyn Le Roy, 1952)
- *Rawhide* [Television] (USA, CBS, 1959-1966)
- *Reservoir Dogs* (USA, Quentin Tarantino, 1992)
- *Rivelazioni di un maniaco sessuale al capo della squadra mobile / So Sweet So Dead* (Italy, Roberto Bianchi Montero, 1972)
- *Roma a mano armata / Rome, Armed to the Teeth* (Italy, Umberto Lenzi, 1976)
- *Roma, città aperta / Rome, Open City* (Italy, Roberto Rossellini, 1945)
- *Rosemary's Baby* (USA, Roman Polanski, 1968)
- *Salò, o le 120 giornate di Sodoma / Salo* (Italy, Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1975)
- *Scream* (USA, Wes Craven, 1996)
- *Se incontri Sartana prega per la tua morte / If You Meet Sartana, Pray for Your Death!* (Italy / France / West Germany, Gianfranco Parolini, 1968)
- *Sei donne per l'assassino / Blood and Black Lace* (Italy, Mario Bava, 1964)
- *Se sei vivo, spara! / Django, Kill...If you Live, Shoot!* (Spain / Italy, Giulio Questi, 1967)
- *Sette contro tutti / Seven Rebel Gladiators* (Italy, Michele Lupo, 1965)
- *Sette pistole per i MacGregor / Seven Guns for the MacGregors* (Italy / Spain, Franco Giraldi, 1966)
- *Shane* (USA, George Stevens, 1952).
- *Singin' in the Rain* (USA, Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen, 1952)
- *Snuff* (Argentina / USA, Michael and Roberta Findlay, 1976)
- *Solamente Nero / The Blood Stained Shadow* (Italy, Antonio Bido, 1978)
- *Star Wars* (USA, George Lucas, 1977)
- *Suor Omicidi / The Killer Nun* (Italy, Giulio Berruti, 1978)

- *Suspiria* (Italy, Dario Argento, 1977)
- *Tenebre* (Italy, Dario Argento, 1982)
- *Teseo contro il minotauro / The Minotaur* (Italy, Silvio Amadio, 1961)
- *The Blues Brothers* (USA, John Landis, 1980)
- *The Curse of Frankenstein* (UK, Terence Fisher, 1957)
- *The Exorcist* (USA, William Friedkin, 1973)
- *The French Connection* (USA, William Friedkin, 1971)
- *The Italian Job* (UK, Peter Collinson, 1969)
- *The Omen* (USA, Richard Donner, 1976)
- *The Quatermass Xperiment* (UK, Val Guest, 1955)
- *The Searchers* (USA, John Ford, 1956)
- *The Ten Commandments* (USA, Cecil B. DeMille, 1956)
- *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (USA, Tobe Hooper, 1974)
- *Thor il conquistatore / Thor the Conqueror* (Italy, Tonino Ricci, 1983)
- *Troll 2* (Italy, Claudio Fragasso, 1990)
- *Twister* (USA, Jan de Bont, 1996)
- *Ultimo tango a Parigi / Last Tango in Paris* (Italy / USA, Bernardo Bertolucci, 1972)
- *Un Chien Andalou* (France, Luis Buñuel, 1929)
- *Una magnum speciale per Tony Saitta / Blazing Magnum* (Italy / Canada / Panama, Alberto De Martino, 1976)
- *Una sull'altra / One on Top of the Other* (Italy / Spain / France, Lucio Fulci, 1969)
- *Uni pistola per Ringo / A Pistol for Ringo* (Italy / Spain, Duccio Tessari, 1965)
- *Uomini si nasce poliziotti si muore / Live Like a Cop, Die Like a Man* (Italy, Ruggero Deodato, 1976)
- *Urlatori alla sbarra / Howlers in the Dock* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1960)
- *Vado... l'ammazzo e torno / Any Gun Can Play* (Italy, Enzo Girolami, 1967)
- *Videodrome* (Canada, David Cronenberg, 1981)
- *Virus / Hell of the Living Dead* (Italy, Bruno Mattei, 1981)
- *Yojimbo* (Japan, Akira Kurosawa, 1961)
- *Zanna Bianca / White Fang* (Italy / Spain / France, 1973)
- *Zombi 2 / Zombie Flesh Eaters* (Italy, Lucio Fulci, 1979)

- *Zombi 3: Le notti del terrore / Zombie 3: Nights of Terror* (Italy, Andrea Bianchi, 1981)
- *Zombi holocaust / Zombie 3* (Italy, Marino Girolami, 1980)

Bibliography

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