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The *Inetto* versus the Unruly Woman

Mastroianni and Sophia Loren

Of all of Mastroianni's various pairings with prominent directors and actors, arguably his most famous counterpart is Sophia Loren. Their production together—they co-starred in twelve films—constitutes Mastroianni's most prolific partnership on screen. In their collaborations, many of which were commercial successes that crossed national and art-house borders, Loren and Mastroianni had each come to symbolize Italian eroticism for both a national and an international audience. In these films, mostly *commedie all'italiana* shot on location in Rome and Naples, the wild female character who rebels against patriarchal authority meets the Italian *inetto,* the man at a loss to respond to the changing role of women in contemporary society, revealing the effects of a gradual post-war female emancipation on Italian masculinity.

In her work *The Unruly Woman: Gender and the Genres of Laughter,* Kathleen Rowe defines the unruly woman as a woman who disrupts the norms of femininity and social hierarchy of male over female through outrageousness and excess.[1] Rowe's theories are also applicable to Sophia Loren, whose exaggerated femininity exhibits itself in the cinematic and extracinematic emphasis on her body: the Italian term most often used to refer to her and other female stars like her during her rise to stardom was *maggiorata fisica,* or exaggerated, voluptuous figure. In her films with Mastroianni, Loren's characters are not mere spectacles: rather, they use the primary tools of the unruly woman—the body, speech, and performance—to get what they want, be it the man, a career, or freedom. Like the *inetto,* the unruly woman has deep roots in Italian culture, from medieval and Renaissance literature up through

the nineteenth and twentieth century variety theater and the post-war *commedia all'italiana*. Moreover, unlike the American texts that feature the exploits of the unruly woman, rarely are Loren's wild characters fully tamed and subsumed into the patriarchal order. As a result, Mastroianni's characters are at a loss to deal with this increasingly independent and emancipated female character, just as he was at a loss to deal with an increasingly materialist culture in *La dolce vita,* the outdated ideals of Sicilian masculinity in *Divorce—Italian Style* and *Il bell'Antonio,* and the militant feminists of *City of Women.*

Although it is difficult to generalize about the many films Loren and Mastroianni made together, important patterns emerge in their most commercially and artistically successful collaborations: *Peccato che sia una canaglia* (Too Bad She's Bad, 1954) and *La fortuna di essere donna* (What a Woman! 1956), both directed by Alessandro Blasetti; *Ieri, oggi e domani* (Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow, 1963), and *Matrimonio all'italiana* (Marriage—Italian Style, 1964), both directed by Vittorio De Sica; Ettore Scola's *Una giornata particolare* (A Special Day, 1977); and Robert Altman's *Prêt-à-Porter* (Ready to Wear, 1994). Their first screen appearances together, the two comedies directed by Blasetti, establish the paradigm of the unruly woman/*inetto* clash.[2] Both set in Rome, they self-consciously play on post-war Italian film culture as they represent a more popular alternative to neorealism, and as they feature a confidently sexual female character intent on manipulation. In the 1960s, this populism continues with two significant shifts: in director (now Vittorio De Sica) and setting (Naples). Whereas Blasetti's films constituted a neorealist/Hollywood hybrid narrative, De Sica's films relocate that Hollywood paradigm with the context of Neapolitan culture, the shared roots of all three participants. In both films, Naples as city and way of life figures prominently in the image of the unruly woman, for Naples itself is the quintessential unruly city, where the world is constantly turned upside-down and rules, be they legal or social or gender-related, are made to be broken. Gender constructs are also the focus of *Una giornata particolare,* but this interrogation departs from the norm, in that it is a serious dramatic piece set against the backdrop of the Fascist period. Nevertheless, issues of sexual normalcy and deviations are configured within the *inetto*/unruly woman paradigm, when Loren's character literally becomes the woman-on-top through her encounter with the perceived heterosexual *inetto:* the homosexual. *Prêt-à-Porter,* which features a stunning Loren and a haggard-looking Mastroianni, provides both a fitting conclusion to this analysis of their collaborations and a nice transition to the following chapter's examination of the representation of aging masculinity in the final stages of Mastroianni's film career.

The Unruly Woman

Natalie Zemon Davis, in her work on gender in early modern Europe, observes how the female sex was believed to be "disorderly" by nature, possessed by an unruliness that needed to be tamed in order for a woman to assume her proper subjugated station in the dominant patriarchal order. Nevertheless, numerous cultural forms—literature, theater, popular festivals and carnivals—often celebrated "sexual inversion," that is "the world-turned-upside-down, the topos of the woman-on-top."[3] For Zemon Davis, these inversions gave expression to many of the conflicts about gender and power in early modern societies, allowing for a cathartic release within the confines of an established cultural paradigm. She argues that, although proper order is restored in the end, the image of the disorderly woman did not always function to keep women in their place. On the contrary, it was a multivalent image that could operate, first, to widen behavioral options for women within and even outside marriage, and second, to sanction riot and political disobedience for both men and women in a society that allowed the lower orders few formal means of protest (131). At the same time, it also had the potential to spill over into daily life, providing an "alternative way of conceiving family structure" (143), promoting resistance to the very constructions the "topsy-turvy" world intended to reinforce in the end.

Kathleen Rowe has adapted Zemon Davis's theories on the disorderly woman into what she calls the unruly woman and has shifted her focus to American romantic comedies of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. Relying as well on Mikhail Bakhtin's work on the carnival and Mary Russo's observations on the female grotesque, she locates the unruly woman's outrageousness and excess in several different spheres: body, speech, and behavior.[4] The unruly woman is often portrayed as loud, fat, androgynous, or masculinized, prone to loose sexual behavior, and associated with dirt. At the same time, however, her sexuality is a source of potential power, becoming transgressive "when she lays claims to her own desire" (30–31).

Just like Zemon Davis's disruptive early modern texts, classical Hollywood films allow for transgressions of feminine norms through the persona of the unruly woman.[5] Much like the cultural paradigms described by Davis, the typical Hollywood film preserves the status quo by righting all wrongs and securing social and sexual order at its conclusion.

The conflicts that rise to the surface before the inevitable happy end, however, reveal many contradictions with respect to gender. For the female protagonist, romantic comedy constitutes the resolution of her Oedipal conflict and the acceptance of heterosexuality, signified by marriage. But the rebellion that precedes assimilation into the patriarchal order is rife with challenges to that very order, and those challenges are literally embodied in the figure of the unruly woman. She consciously uses her body through masquerade and performance to get what she wants: independence from familial structures, a career, or freedom from the norms of femininity. The tools she employs are either speech, as a way of taking control of the narrative, or her body, through which she parades her desire in a controlled spectacle or feminine masquerade. Thus, throughout the classical narrative, the unruly woman is on top and in control, before being ultimately tamed and subsumed into the heterosexual patriarchal order.

In Italian culture, Jane Tylus traces the presence of the unruly woman all the way back to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. In a story told on the seventh day of Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron,* for instance, Monna Ghita takes a lover in order to get revenge on her philandering husband, eventually locking him out of the house and berating him from the upstairs window in front of all the townspeople. Tylus also cites Caterina Sforza's public display of her genitals at the walls of the Forlì citadel in Machiavelli's *Discorsi,* when she tells her captors that she would not care if they were to kill her children, for "she was still capable of bearing more." Both these female figures, as well as the female characters who populate Flaminio Scala's *commedia dell'arte* scenarios (see chapter 1), disrupt action from a liminal space of a window or a wall. By halting the primary action, the unruly woman employs spectacle as the tool of her disruption through words (Monna Ghita) or her body (Caterina). "Traditional passivity," that of the spectacle, is transformed into the "manipulative action" of the unruly woman.[6]

After the Renaissance, more modern incarnations of the spirit of the carnival came in the form of Italian popular theater, specifically the *teatro del varietà* as it developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Its origins in Italy can be traced to the influence of the French *café-chantant* (translated into Italian as the *caffè-concerto*), which indicated a place, usually a café or restaurant, where the clientele would be entertained by a show composed of short skits of music, comedy, and exhibitions of agility and ability. More popular than bourgeois mainstream theater and featuring a wide variety of performers from singers and comics to story-tellers, magicians, and dancers, it had cross-class and cross-regional appeal, especially as its locus shifted from the café to

the theater proper. In Italy, its roots are strongly anchored to operas, operettas, and Neapolitan culture.[7] Each troupe featured a *capocomico,* the headlining male performer who would often be the creative force behind the show; the *diva,* the female star; and the *soubrette,* at first referencing the second-lead singer in the troupe but later used synonymously with the *diva.* The first site exclusively devoted to variety theater —the Salone Margherita, which opened its doors in 1890—was in Naples. The city had always been known as an important center of music and theater, with its famous *canzonette* (storytelling songs) and *sceneggiate* (skits based on popular songs of the time). Some of the most famous variety performers were Neapolitan, including Raffaele Viviani and the de Filippo family: Peppino, Titina, and Eduardo, on whose work two of the Mastroianni/Loren films would be based. Vittorio De Sica, who directed those two films, was steeped in this very tradition with his work in Mario Mattòli's Za Bum variety company, a collaboration which helped launch his early career as an actor in the cinema.

Just as in the American counterpart of vaudeville and burlesque, women played an important part in the variety spectacles. As Robert Allen has argued in his work on American burlesque, female spectacle "was built partially or wholly around feminine sexual display, and each contained its own strategies for producing male scopic pleasure and containing the moral and social transgressiveness that pleasure necessarily entailed."[8] At the same time, particularly after the turn of the century, there was an "insubordinate, inversive spirit" to burlesque, personified in female performers such as Sophie Tucker and Mae West. Similarly, in Italy, the independent female images that performers such as Anna Magnani perfected on stage countered the scantily clad dancers and chorus girls, whose function was pure sexualized spectacle. As Wanda Osiris, one of the more prominent *soubrette* of the *varietà* noted for her famous descents from large flights of stairs, said: "I was always completely dressed, in fact, because if the prima donna stripped down she had no class. But the other girls showed off their bodies—they were for the lower-class audience."[9]

Italian variety theater, as it developed into the twentieth century, gradually incorporated film into its repertoire. Shows exclusively devoted to performance skits gave way to the *avanspettacolo.* Literally meaning "before the show," it consisted of a performance of various sketches that would precede the film screenings and last about an hour. This phenomenon became popular after the introduction of the sound film, replacing the human contact of musical accompaniment.[10] Films that followed the *avanspettacolo,* in particular those of the late 1930s and early 1940s, were no strangers to the figure of the unruly woman. As the

film industry expanded with Fascist government financing, filmmakers often turned to Hollywood genres as a model for artistic and aesthetic inspiration. The romantic comedy was no exception. Marcia Landy notes that comedies of the 1930s and 1940s use theatricality, specifically impersonation and spectacle, to reveal "complex portraits of courtship, familialism, and the forms of sexual conflicts which animate the films."[11] One example of romantic comedy that stands out is the schoolgirl comedy, which first arrived in 1934 but flourished in the early 1940s. These films feature rebellious female protagonists who, like Rowe's unruly woman, use cunning speech and active performance to subvert the authorities, be they academic and/or familial, that oppress them. One film, Raffaello Matarazzo's *Il birichino di papà* (Daddy's Little Devil, 1943), has the female protagonist, a rambunctious tomboy, disrupt a Fascist-inspired rhythmic gymnastics display with her singing from a window above the piazza, much like the *commedia dell'arte*'s women at the window. Although these films conclude with the inevitable marriage and/or the taming of the unruly pupil, they nevertheless provided a space for female rebellion and subversion of patriarchal authority as they questioned the norms of proper feminine conduct within the heavily prescribed parameters of Fascist Italy.[12]

Post-war comedies shifted their emphasis from escapism to realism, as the aesthetic discourse of neorealism assumed the primary place among critics and filmmakers, if not audiences. Gian Piero Brunetta isolates various stages in the development of Italian comedy from post-war liberation up through the economic boom. The first Italian comedies to appear at the war's end drew their inspiration precisely from the variety theater and *avanspettacolo* that were so popular during the war. Not only did cinema turn to this medium for many of its performers (Anna Magnani, Aldo Fabrizi, Totò, among others) but they also had as their focus the world of popular theater itself, the most famous being Federico Fellini and Alberto Lattuada's *Luci del varietà* (Variety Lights, 1950), which chronicled a variety theater troupe as it traveled around Italy. In the 1950s, comedies developed in two ways. First, scripts became more fully realized by a group of screenwriters who specialized in film comedy, particularly the trio of Agenore Incrocci (billed as Age), Furio Scarpelli, and Ettore Scola. Second, as the decade progressed, they began to reflect a greater commitment to the ideological complexities and realities of everyday life in a reconstructed Italy.[13]

One of the realities that 1950s comedies brought to the surface was shifting gender roles in the post-war social and sexual economy. The figure of the unruly woman becomes the personification on film of these conflicts. During the 1950s, Italy began to recover from the effects of

Fascism and the war, and to recover with great gusto. The gross national product doubled, and personal income increased by over 60 percent. As families began to earn more money, their children, both boys and girls, were able to continue their studies longer: by 1955, enrollment in middle schools and industrial training schools was almost double that of 1947, and by 1962 it had more than tripled that initial level. In addition, their leisure time increased, as young girls in particular left the protective shadows of their homes and ventured out into the public sphere to enjoy music, dance, and the cinema.[14] In films, Brunetta notes how female characters in the 1950s are caught between traditional moral expectations and their own desire for sexual and social mobility brought on by the liberalization of Fascist gender policies and women's recently acquired right to vote in 1946. While their career ambitions are never extremely high, mostly relegated to aspiring actresses or models, they nevertheless express a longing for independence from familial constraints that conflict not only with parental expectations but also with the dominant ideology. These young women reveal a gap between the generations, as daughters rebel against the law of the father.[15]

The primary tools with which these unruly women pursued their desires were their bodies. With Silvana Mangano's infamous boogie woogie in Giuseppe de Santis's *Riso amaro* (Bitter Rice, 1948), the female body came to occupy a prominent position in many post-war Italian films. Labeled by critics as "pink neorealism," these films, by showcasing scantily clad female beauties, attempted to achieve the box office success that often eluded most neorealist films by making the social problems of the day appear "nice and rosy." Actresses such as Mangano, Lucia Bosè, Gina Lollobrigida, and Sophia Loren soon became extremely popular stars both in Italy and abroad, prompting critics to note how Italian cinema of the 1950s came to be dominated by a "star system of exaggerated bodies" and "the war of the breasts."[16] This emphasis on their bodies also emanated from their origins in show business: all these actresses were discovered in beauty contests. Lollobrigida finished third in the 1947 Miss Italy contest, behind the winner Bosè (Mangano was also a contestant). Recent studies on the nature of beauty pageants have argued that these contests are more than theatrically staged events intended to objectify female beauty. On the contrary, "beauty contests are places where cultural meanings are produced, consumed, and rejected, where local and global, ethnic and national, national and international cultures and structures of power are engaged in their most trivial but vital aspects."[17] The female body serves, for Stephen Gundle, as the site of inscription for what constitutes the national. The post-war Italian female body, as it appeared in films, theatrical productions, and pag-

eants, came to represent a new national dynamic based on a highly sexualized feminine corporeality, one that would signify national pride, modernity, and fecundity, reflecting a naturalness at harmony with the national landscape.[18]

At the same time, however, the power attributed to the increasingly prominent female body presented moral, sexual, and social challenges to the patriarchal order, as the female used her body to turn traditional notions of proper feminine conduct upside-down. The influence of American cinema and the classical romantic comedy is not coincidental here. In attempting to increase the box-office revenues of the dominant neorealist aesthetic, filmmakers looked to the female body, in particular the pin-up popularized in the post-war era by Rita Hayworth and Ava Gardner, and incarnated by Mangano in *Bitter Rice* and Lollobrigida as La Bersagliera in Luigi Comencini's *Pane, amore e fantasia* (Bread, Love and Dreams, 1953), the first major success of 1950s pink neorealism. The shrew-like outbursts of La Bersagliera, the poorest but most beautiful of the town's residents, underscore her rage at her economic situation. For Millicent Marcus, however, her taming is a necessary preclusion to the film's happy end, in which "the image of La Bersagliera as a furious, caged animal is replaced by the sultry and seductive one of the beautiful wench lying on the prison floor singing her heart out for love."[19] With the emphasis placed on the economic issues raised and gender inversions played out within the film's narrative, *Pane, amore e fantasia* questions the social and sexual status quo through the rose-tinted glasses of pink neorealism.

When Lollobrigida's salary demands became too expensive for the planned third film in the *Pane, amore* series in 1955, Sophia Loren was called in to take her place.[20] By this time, Loren had begun to establish herself as an unruly woman in her own right, with her role as the adulterous pizza-maker's wife in De Sica's *L'oro di Napoli* (The Gold of Naples, 1954). Wearing her sexuality on her sleeve (or in her case her skin-tight dress), Loren's character exuded a confident femininity which reduced men to weakness and allowed her to obtain what she wanted, in this case both a husband and a lover. It would be the first of many rebellious women she would capture on the screen, which would classify her, according to Gundle, as "a cultural icon and even a national symbol." Not classically "Italian," she embodied a more popular spirit, that of a "highly subversive idea of unabashed female sexuality."[21] This subversion was linked not only to her popular roots, specifically to the region of Naples (as will be discussed below), but also to the very evident and very emphasized exaggerated proportions of her body. This physical excess, for Rowe, is one of the essential qualities of the unruly

woman. Suggestive of an uncontainable physical appetite, Loren's curvaceous figure intimates instead a sexual uncontrollability, not so much in her own sexual desire but, rather, in the uncontrollable response that her body provokes in the men who are unable to resist her.

Loren's effect on screen as unruly woman brings us back to the central question of this study: Mastroianni and Italian masculinity. For Rowe, the function of the unruly woman in classical Hollywood romantic comedy is to chastise the male hero and then bring him in line with the norms of masculinity from which he has strayed (146–47). Once proper virility is restored, the unruly woman can then become the domesticated ideal woman, whose body assumes a de-sexualized maternal function. The Italian case, however, is not so cut and dried. Clearly, much like his American counterpart, the Italian male victim of the unruly woman is castrated by her unruliness, rendered weak, immobile and, in comparison to her successful exploits, inept. The presence of the over-sexualized female body, however, has radically different consequences in 1950s American and Italian films. Rowe notes that in Hollywood films such as *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and *Some Like It Hot*, the unruly woman "was stripped of her intelligence" and "reduced to a pure sexual creature," whose power was replaced with a vulnerability whose sexuality served the sole purpose of male pleasure" (170–71). In Loren's comedies with Mastroianni, by contrast, the exaggerated display of female sexuality is not purely fetishistic. Rather, it is a site of empowerment, one that castrates the male at the same time that it refuses to completely domesticate the female. On the narrative level, it underscores the more open nature of post-war feature films with respect to narrative closure. Moreover, Loren's incarnation of the unruly woman as paired with Mastroianni's *inetto* becomes a topos which does not shift over time, unlike the Hollywood unruly woman who gradually loses her independence in both love and career in the 1950s, culminating for Rowe in her replacement by men in the aforementioned *Some Like It Hot*. In Italy she survives historical shifts, from the economic boom to the cultural revolutions in the 1970s and into the globalized 1990s, as well as the various different movements in Italian cinema—the *maggiorate fisiche, commedia all'italiana*, and the re-examination in the 1970s of Italy's Fascist legacy—by remaining the woman on top.

The 1950s: How Lucky to Be a Woman

In Loren and Mastroianni's first film together, the first of three films they would make under the director Alessandro Blasetti, they did not appear on screen simultaneously. *Tempi nostri* (Our Times, 1954) was a

French-Italian co-production featuring eight episodes (and a prologue) based on short stories by some of Italy's most prominent post-war writers, including Alberto Moravia and Vasco Pratolini. Mastroianni was featured in the second episode, entitled "Il pupo," in which he played an unemployed husband and father who, no longer able to care for all of his children, sets out with his wife (Lea Padovani) to find an appropriate place in which to abandon their youngest child to ensure that he be taken in by a proper family or the proper authorities. At the time the film was made, over two million Italians were officially listed as unemployed, a figure believed to greatly under-represent the actual number, and an additional four million were considered "marginally employed."[22] Shot on location in Rome, the episode follows the couple in their futile quest, underscoring the social plight of the *figli di nessuno* (no one's children), while at the same time infusing it with lighthearted humor at the couple's indecisiveness and leaving us with a rosy ending (they are ultimately unable to abandon the child). Mastroianni's turn as the husband was typical of many of the early roles he played on screen: the proletarian *brava ragazzo* (good guy) trapped in the hostile economic circumstances of Reconstruction Italy. Loren's role as foil to the comedian Totò in the film's last episode, "La macchina fotografica" (The Camera), showcases her status as female pin-up by having Totò take her photograph in a variety of seductive poses, promising her a career in fashion. Throughout the film she retains the upper hand, by refusing to submit to his sexual advances.

Peccato che sia una canaglia, also set among the working-class in Rome and based on a short story by Alberto Moravia, recounts the story of Paolo (Mastroianni), a taxi driver who one day picks up Lina Stroppiani (Loren) and her two male companions, who then attempt to steal Paolo's taxi. Paolo is an earnest, hard-working man without family ties (his entire family perished during a wartime air raid), who longs for a stable, middle-class family life. The not-so-subtle contrast that comes to light in the very first scene is between Paolo's serious dedication to making a better life for himself and the typical leisure culture of his generation, who pass their time at the beach or as con artists. It is Lina's job to distract Paolo while her accomplices carry out their mission. Lina accomplishes this task using the instrument of the unruly woman: her body. She changes into her bathing suit behind the bushes, splashes seductively in the water as she invites Paolo to join her on the beach, and then lies down on Paolo's chest in the sand. Paolo nonetheless is able to thwart the robbery but holds onto Lina, planning to turn her in to the police. Lina escapes when Paolo is cited for a traffic violation; later he sees her again and chases her down, only to get into an accident. Deciding that paternal law would be more effective in disciplining Lina, he brings her home to confront her father (Vittorio De Sica), who, unknown to Paolo, is also a thief. The culture of theft is rampant in the neighborhood: the children in the street below steal Paolo's tire (Lina secretly makes them put it back), and even Lina's grandmother pickpockets Paolo's wallet. As the scene progresses, Signor Stroppiani gradually seduces Paolo, pretending to be an honest person who scolds his wayward daughter. To Paolo, both the beautiful Lina and this surrogate family begin to seem attractive, especially when, as he returns to his garage, he finds Lina paying for the damage to the car. He resolves to reform Lina and help her be honest. He goes to the cinema with her family, and she gives him an engraved cigarette case.

Unfortunately, Lina had just stolen that cigarette case from the owner of Paolo's garage, and Paolo, on learning the truth, vows to end their relationship. Confronting Lina and her father as they attempt to steal suitcases at the train station, Paolo intends to take them to the police but has another car accident, this time with a group of Indian tourists: Paolo is taken to a hospital, and Lina and her father escape. Once again, Lina succeeds in winning over Paolo as she tearfully apologizes to him. He proposes marriage and gives her his mother's wedding ring. Although she slips the ring back on Paolo's keychain when he is not looking, Lina vows to help raise the 100,000 lira needed to pay for the damage from Paolo's latest accident. With her father and the two male friends from the thwarted taxi robbery, she boards a bus with the intention of pick-pocketing the passengers. Paolo sees them, boards the bus and, catching them in the act, takes them to the police station. Through both verbal manipulation and feminine charms, Lina (along with her father) manages to not only weasel out of the charges against her, but to get the money for Paolo to pay off his taxi. The film concludes with Lina's supposed "taming" into marriage with three slaps, a ring, and a passionate kiss in front of a cheering crowd.

Peccato che sia una canaglia is a prototypical example of the unruly woman in Italian romantic comedy. With its light-hearted tone and satirical look at black-market culture in post-war Italy, the film pivots around the antagonistic chemistry of the two stars, with De Sica providing additional laughs. It also provided the blueprint for future Loren-Mastroianni collaborations, with Loren's character emerging to dominate Mastroianni's. *Peccato che sia una canaglia* was typical of 1950s post-neorealist Italian comedies favored by Blasetti, in that they featured young, carefree protagonists who were not preoccupied with major social and political issues.[23] A scene of spectatorship reinforces this tendency in filmmaking. Paolo, Lina, and her family all go to see a

22. Vittorio De Sica, Sophia Loren, and Marcello Mastroianni in a scene from *Peccato che sia una canaglia* (1954). Courtesy of Photofest.

fictitious film entitled *Mano pericolosa*—Dangerous Hand—about, ironically, a thief. Signor Stroppiani disparagingly notes how unrealistic it is. The scene's self-conscious irony is not lost here: the eminently recognizable Vittorio De Sica, neorealist director *per eccellenza*, criticizing a film for being too superficial, childish, and unbelievable.

Throughout the film, Loren's body is the center of attention. Loren was the choice of the film's two scriptwriters, Ennio Flaiano and Suso Cecchi d'Amico, the latter of whom described the young Loren as "beautiful, excessive and decorative as a Christmas tree."[24] The camera reinforces her physicality, particularly her curves: she is usually photographed in a full-frontal medium shot highlighting her bust, waist, and hips. In addition, her body is never still: she plays with her hair, moves her arms, swings her hips, and pouts her lips. As opposed to being the static object of the gaze, hers is a dynamic presence, reinforcing the notion of activity over passivity as the unruly woman employs her female charms to achieve her goals. Moreover, Lina self-consciously acknowledges the power of the female body in the many mirror shots that appear in the film. As Lina looks at her own image, she recognizes not

only her own beauty but also the power that lies within that recognition as it reduces men such as Paolo to bumbling idiots.

Conscious of her feminine powers, Lina constructs various feminine personae to get herself both in and out of trouble. Here she employs another tool of the unruly woman: speech and performance, which, according to Rowe, is a way in which the unruly woman gains control of the narrative (37). Every time Paolo tries to leave her—shown through repeating scenes of him castigating himself as he drives his taxi—she is able to manipulate him by assuming a traditionally feminine role. As the fallen woman, she feigns melodrama, moaning to Paolo that she is destined for prostitution, unless he drops his case against her and "saves" her from her impending doom. When confronted about the stolen cigarette case, she is the desperate sacrificing girlfriend, crying that she only wanted to give him a gift. Later, at the police station, she proclaims herself ready to go to jail for him. She even knows how to play the perfect future wife. As she serves coffee to Paolo and her father, the latter refers to her as *una perfetta massaia* (a perfect housewife), referencing the term favored by the Fascist regime in its attempt to both ruralize (hence, de-urbanize) and domesticate women.

The allusion here, like much of the film, is ironic, for Lina is never fully "tamed," even at the film's conclusion. In the last scene, as Lina and Paolo leave the police station, they are constantly struggling to see who is in control: he keeps pulling her aside and she keeps moving along, stopping to inquire with a vendor as to the price of onions, or heading out onto the sidewalk. Throughout this final scene, her defiant body posturing reinforces her status as unruly woman. When Paolo slaps her three times, an action she actually invites, she rebounds and smiles after each slap. Her physical insolence and her verbal response (*Finalmente*—"finally") belie submission to his authority. Their final kiss in front of a growing, admiring crowd, although setting the prototype for the Loren/Mastroianni consummation, nevertheless rejects the complete capitulation of the unruly woman into patriarchal domination, for it is her active desire rather than docile acquiescence which dominates the scene.

In the next Blasetti-Loren-Mastroianni project, *La fortuna di essere donna*, it is the Mastroianni character who, initially at least, has the upper hand.[25] Blasetti originally wanted to recreate the successful formula of *Peccato* by reuniting Loren and Mastroianni with De Sica, but the producers felt that Charles Boyer would be a bigger box-office draw. Set against the backdrop of the burgeoning Roman fashion and film industry of the 1950s, Mastroianni, departing from his usual *bravi*

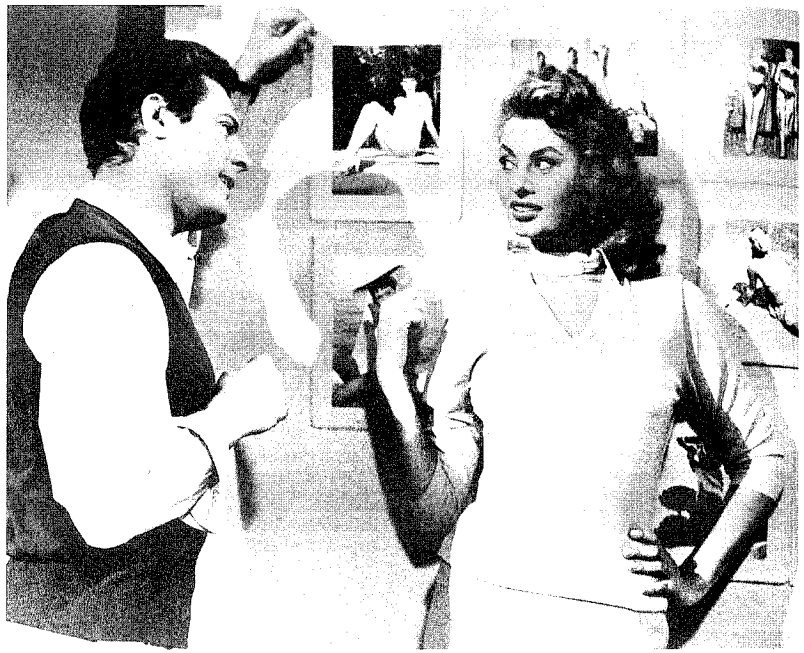
23. Lina (Loren) plays the role of the fallen woman to the gullible Paolo (Mastroianni). Courtesy of Photofest.

ragazzi roles, plays Corrado Betti, a photographer, who captures the stunning Antonietta Fallari (Loren) on film as she fixes her stocking. After the photograph appears on a magazine cover without her permission, Antonietta's fiancé, Federico, confronts Corrado, but soon Antonietta finds herself seduced by Corrado's promise of making her a star and by the photographer himself. After a passionate photography session and the pledge of help in her career, Antonietta overhears Corrado dismissing their relationship to his friends. Now bent on revenge by arousing Corrado's jealousy, she courts his neighbor Count Gregorio Sennetti (Boyer), a shifty agent with a penchant for using his wife's money to seduce young starlets. As she rises up the ladder of success with a contract from a movie producer, she suggests marriage to the count at a party. A jealous Corrado calls the count's wife to the party, and rather than embarrassing Antonietta, she and the count's wife bond over the stupidity of men. Ultimately, she gets Corrado to confess his love for her and the two once again seal their union with a kiss.

Even more than in *Peccato che sia una canaglia,* Loren's body dominates not only the screen but also the narrative of *La fortuna di essere donna,* as her physical attributes attract Corrado (and every other

male) to Antonietta. The film parodies the dominant presence of the *maggiorate fisiche* in Italian cinema and print culture of the day. Antonietta's world is populated with photographers, agents, and movie producers who fall all over her in an attempt to make money off her body. This parody, akin to the more serious examination of 1950s star culture in Michelangelo Antonioni's *La signora senza camelie* (The Woman without Camelias, 1952), is self-reflexive in nature. There are many insinuations to Loren's own rise to fame: her association with Carlo Ponti, a much older producer, is similar to her relationship with the count. Comments used to describe Antonietta—her fabulous body, her gorgeous "lines," her "advantages"—all play off the discourse used to describe Loren in the popular press, both in Italy and abroad.[26] As if to reinforce the Antonietta/Loren connection, the filmmakers use an interesting editing device to show Antonietta's initial surprise photograph. As she stands on the Appian Way in the film's opening sequence, we see a medium-long back shot of Antonietta as she fixes her stocking. The back shot is featured throughout much of the film, designed to show off Loren's narrow waist and curvaceous behind in her tight skirts. On screen right, a truck filled with photographers, including Corrado, approaches, yelling, "Signorina, over here." Classically, the next shot would be a reverse shot of Antonietta as she would soon be captured on film. Instead, the next shot is precisely the magazine cover, in a pin-up pose typical of Loren's publicity shots, as her horrified fiancé sees it at the magazine stand. The cover of *Le Ore* thus becomes both the inciting incident which sets the plot in motion as well as a self-conscious play on Loren's own image in Italian popular culture in the 1950s.

Yet, while those in the fashion and film industry attempt to create the proper performance of femininity, for Antonietta, as for Lina, it is a masquerade. Throughout the film, Antonietta is in constant motion: playing with her hair, seductively posing her body, and straightening her clothes. And, like Lina, she takes pleasure in the power of her appearance, as she is forever looking at herself approvingly in mirrors. In this film, her legs as opposed to her torso become the featured focus of the camera, but in the narrative they are used in such a way as is typical of the unruly woman: as a means of empowerment. Corrado's first accidental photograph becomes a means to an end: she tells Corrado that she will not sue him for failure to get her permission for its publication if he helps make her a star. And, although it was initially Corrado who urged her to pose provocatively in a towel, it is she who later rips off her skirt to pose with the count in just her garter belt and stockings in an attempt to arouse Corrado's jealousy. She proves that she, not the men



24. Corrado (Mastroianni) meets his match in Antonietta (Loren) in *La fortuna di essere donna* (1956). Courtesy of Photofest.

and women above her in the hierarchy of the fashion and film communities, controls her body, and she uses that body to get what she wants: in this case both a career and a husband, with sexual insinuations as well (the film suggests that Antonietta sleeps with Corrado after the towel photo session). His callous treatment of her after their liaison is what fuels her revenge and drives her to pelt him with rocks at the film's end, screaming at him, "Tell me you love me or I'll break your head."

Threats are not Antonietta's only tools of verbal manipulation used to tame Corrado's bachelor ways and make him conform to heterosexual norms. She revisits the sites of his mischief—his studio, the restaurant—and flaunts feigned tales of her sexual exploits. She turns the very lines he initially uses on her to induce his jealous rage. She throws back Corrado's "progressive" discourse on marriage and sexual freedom when she returns to his studio after being with the count. In exacting her revenge, Antonietta takes the typical male verbal tools of seduction and twists them around, proving that the unruly woman's body is not the only instrument of her success.

Unlike *Peccato,* however, in which the main characters were all working class, in *Fortuna* Antonietta must hide her working-class origins as she passes from shopgirl to starlet. This metamorphosis is accomplished on both the iconic and verbal level. Her look changes: she goes from shapely and provocatively dressed in bright colors and loud prints to a thinner and more demure "woman"—she is in fact told by the manager of the fashion house Fontanesi (perhaps based on the popular Sorelle Fontana atelier) to lose ten pounds and dress only in black, advice she follows rigorously. Her long hair and wild curls are neatly coiffed into fashionable mink hats and headdresses. The count aids in remaking her image, counseling her on how she should walk, talk, and present herself to the public. Antonietta, however, ultimately rejects this class discourse. Her return to her untamed working-class roots comes at the end of the film. Inspired by Elena, the count's wife, and her departing words—"you've displayed real spirit—you're a wonderful person"—Antonietta realizes that class comes from within, not without. In the film's final scene, as she bombards Corrado with her anger (and stones), her hair has once again become as wild as her demeanor, a signifier of the unruly woman's untamed ways. As if to reinforce her riotous nature, she screams: "Don't forget I'm of peasant stock and I'm going to plow you under!" This ending is typical of the 1950s *commedia all'italiana*'s tendency toward a privileging of working-class life over the vacuous inclinations of the upper class, represented here by the phony count, and the profit-mongering and lecherous film industry. The intent, however, is not the subversion of authority by the working class, as was a common topos of the carnivalesque and the grotesque. Rather, it involves the recognition of the excessive materiality and emptiness of the industrial ruling class.

In both Blasetti films, the endings, although typical of romantic comedy, fail to imply the conversion to a desexualized, maternal femininity that traditionally characterizes the battle between the unruly woman and her male "victim." Whereas both Lina and Antonietta are calmed into submission by a passionate kiss, there is little proof that the women are tamed of their wild ways. In fact, both characters retain their exaggerated femininity, flaunting it to the very last frame. Ultimately, while Paolo and Corrado succeed in getting the girl and creating the couple, the hidden power of the unruly woman never quite disappears, and thus has important consequences for the representation of masculinity. While the man may be brought in line with social norms (as Corrado is cured of his pretentious, bachelor ways), he is unable to disempower the unruly woman completely. Her primary tool, her body,

is never de-sexualized and still remains iconographically privileged at the films' conclusions. In each film, some sign of unruliness prevails, be it Antonietta's wild hair or Lina's physical and verbal insubordination. Thus the male character as incarnated by Mastroianni has proven himself inept at the taming of the shrew.

The 1960s: Belly Laughter

When asked to comment on their successful working relationship, De Sica, Mastroianni, and Loren have all pointed to their Neapolitan heritage as one of the primary reasons for their onscreen chemistry. Their genealogical roots, however, were anchored more to the rural area surrounding Naples than to the city itself. Loren was born in the town of Pozzuoli, just south of the city, and Mastroianni in Fontana-Liri, which, at the time of his birth, was situated in the province of Caserta in the Campania region (the home of Naples), but only three years later was redistricted to the province of Frosinone in Lazio. Although De Sica was born in Sora, a town southeast of Rome, he identified himself as Neapolitan: "My mother and father . . . were Neapolitan. And my family was very Neapolitan [*neapolitanissma*], the entire genealogical tree."[27] Loren attributes the "spark" among the three of them to the overall character of Neapolitan life: "the three of us were united in a kind of complicity that the Neapolitans always have among themselves. The same sense of humor, the same rhythms, the same philosophies of life, the same natural cynicism."[28]

In the 1960s, the trio made three films together, with De Sica behind rather than in front of the camera: two comedies—*Ieri, oggi e domani,* a three-episode film with Mastroianni and Loren playing different roles in each, and *Matrimonio all'italiana,* based on Eduardo de Filippo's famous play, *Filumena Marturanu*—and one drama, *I girasoli* (Sunflower, 1970), set in post-war Russia. De Sica's Neapolitan films can be seen, in many ways, as a cinematic love song to his heritage, and his films capture the city's chaotic nature in all its beauty. As De Sica himself put it, the Neapolitans are "a great people, unique in the world, with many defects, some of which are the consequence of their secular misery and undernourishment, and with noble heart and spirit like no one else."[29] Moreover, his picture of Neapolitan life is decidedly working class, as it takes its point of departure from the de Filippo sources. De Filippo wrote both the treatment and the screenplay (along with his wife Isabella Quarantotti) for the first episode of *Ieri, oggi, domani* entitled "Adelina of Naples." And, although de Filippo's class analysis aims more toward a dramatic exposition of the trials and tribu-

lations of this sector of the population, De Sica is more concerned with the celebration of the Neapolitan spirit, rather than, in a departure from his neorealist production, a social exposé of its grave problems.

The first De Sica-Loren-Mastroianni collaboration set in Naples was not in fact directed by De Sica but by Mario Camerini. *La bella mugnaia* (The Miller's Beautiful Wife, 1955), a remake of Camerini's 1936 *Il capello a tre punti* (The Three-Pointed Hat), departs from the contemporaneous Blasetti films in that (1) it features Loren and Mastroianni already coupled as husband and wife; and (2) it is a historical comedy filmed in lush Technicolor Cinemascope, an extremely popular technique of the Hollywood productions being filmed in Italy at that time. Set in 1682, Mastroianni plays Luca, a scheming miller who uses his beautiful wife Carmela (Loren) to incur favors with the intrusive local government, headed by a corrupt governor (De Sica), whose principle desire is to sleep with Carmela. Through a series of comic mishaps and assumed identities, both men learn their appropriate lessons: the governor to govern fairly and to be faithful to his wife; and Luca to be a proper citizen and to covet, not flaunt, his wife's physical attributes. This scenario fits more closely to the model of the Hollywood romantic comedies, in that the unruly woman tames the male and subsumes him into the patriarchal order, thus enabling her to tone down her own sexuality as well. In fact, at the film's end, Carmela eschews her previously risqué style of dressing (tight bodices, bare arms, deep cleavage) for a more covered although still skin-tight look. Mastroianni and Loren's 1960s films continue to privilege the domestic situation, but the focus shifts from the romance itself to how the unruly woman negotiates the power struggles in both the public and the private sphere.

Culturally, Naples has many links to the figure of the unruly woman. As Giuliana Bruno has shown in her research on early film culture in Naples, the very nature of the public Neapolitan woman connotes unruliness. Although the division between public and private collapses in Neapolitan everyday life, that collapse is attributed mostly to men, who dominate the public sphere while relegating women to the private, domestic one. Consequently, men can walk the streets, while women are "streetwalkers."[30] The anthropologist Thomas Belmonte, in his study on Naples in the 1970s, observes that although Neapolitan culture is "mother-centered," women are still bound by patriarchal law, particularly in the division between public and private:

> The women of southern Italy are powerful only in the sense that they perform "powerfully" the innumerable tasks and chores which

men and children set for them. Women as wives are extolled, and women as mothers are deified, but women as women do not count for much in southern Italy. Men refer to them, as they pass in the street, synechdochically—a part of the body suffices to identify any female who is not immediately recognizable as wife or mother.[31]

The unruly woman as incarnated by Sophia Loren in the De Sica films challenges the division between public and private. Following in the tradition of the heroines of many Notari films, she proudly occupies that public space and reclaims it as her own, simultaneously bringing the private domestic sphere into the public. In the case of Adelina, the maternal body in all its glory conquers the dominant male sphere of public space with her triumphant *passeggiata*. Filumena, by contrast, relies on her mind, specifically the joke or *beffa*, as a means of attaining what she wants. In the end, the Neapolitan male, far from controlling his environment, is subsumed into the dominant unruly woman's space.

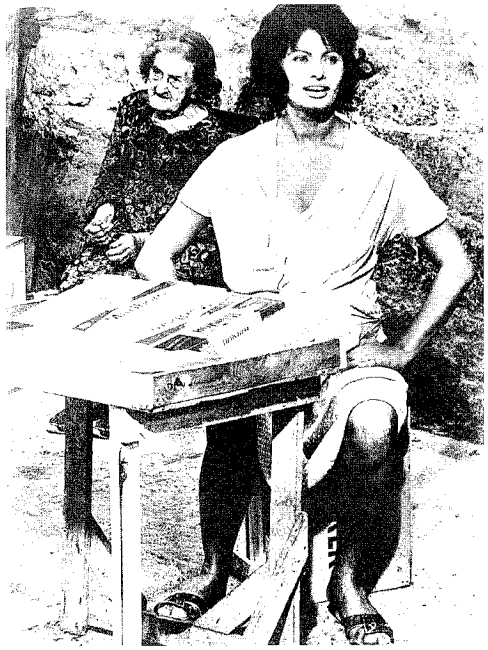
Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow, as conceived by Carlo Ponti and financed by the American producer Joseph E. Levine, intended to play off the trio's popular 1950s comedies as well as their recent successes in the United States: De Sica and Loren from *Two Women* (La ciociara, 1960) and Mastrioanni in *Divorce—Italian Style* (see chapter 3). Ponti's idea was to direct the films toward the commercial rather than art-house market.[32] Both *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* and *Marriage—Italian Style* were immediately dubbed into English and had very wide releases in non–art-house theaters in the United States, where the latter's title was intentionally changed from the de Filippo original to reference Germi's film. In keeping with its popular slant, the filmmakers of *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* relied on the tripartite structure of the sketch, which evokes the popular variety-theater tradition and exploited a popular trend in Italian filmmaking of the 1950s and 1960s: De Sica had in fact made two previous sketch films, the above-mentioned *The Gold of Naples*, in which he directed all the episodes, and one episode ("La riffa," the raffle) in *Boccaccio '70* (1962). The sketch also has roots in the Neapolitan culture of the *sceneggiata*, in which a popular song was translated narratively into either a theatrical sketch or a short film and was often drawn from recent events covered in the *cronaca nera* (the darker side of the news).[33] The "Adelina" episode, although more a humorous feature than a dark tale, was actually inspired by the true story of Concetta Muccardo, a woman who resorted to a series of pregnancies in order to avoid being jailed, and who, at one point, threatened to shut down the production unless she received compensation (which she did).[34] The film adaptation did not deviate much from its real-life inspiration: Adelina Sbaratti (Loren) is about to be incarcerated for not paying a fine for selling black-market cigarettes, a fact complicated further by her and her husband Carmine's (Mastroianni) open flaunting of the law. She soon learns from a lawyer (Domenico Verace, played by Agostino Salvietti) that she cannot be thrown in prison while pregnant. The savvy Adelina then calculates just how long she will have after the birth of this, her second child, before she has to produce another one in order to avoid incarceration (she gets an additional six months for breastfeeding). She then proceeds to have a total of seven children, literally squeezing one on top of the other in their one room apartment. Trouble arrives when Carmine, exhausted from his familial duties, is unable to produce another offspring in time to keep Adelina out of jail. After a doctor's visit and a desperate turn to her friend Pasquale, Adelina decides that the only option left for her is to begin serving her sentence. Her neighborhood soon rallies behind her, imposing a "tax" on every purchase (*tassa d' 'a multa*) to help Adelina pay off the fine. An astute Verace also alerts the press to her plight, and soon she is given a presidential pardon. She triumphantly returns to her neighborhood and her family as a local celebrity.

De Sica's objective in bringing the story to the screen was to soften the non-cinematic style of de Filippo's film script by adding exterior shots to the interior ones, in order that "Naples be ever-present and the Neapolitans function like a Greek chorus."[35] In order to capture the reality of Naples, De Sica returned, at least stylistically, to his neorealist roots, filming mostly on location (some interior shots were done in Rome) and using non-professional actors in supporting roles and as extras. The episode is filled with unique touches of Neapolitan life and culture: its language (it was written and delivered in heavy Neapolitan dialect), its songs, and even its superstitions: at one point, Adelina calls in a sorcerer to help chase away the evil spirits that impede Carmine from performing his sexual duties. What emerges is a portrait of a community in which solidarity reigns above self-interest, revealing the beneficial side of the fusion of the public and the private in contemporary urban life.

Once again, Loren's body is at the center of the film. This fusion of public and private is written on the unruly female body, as Adelina uses her reproductive capacity to escape rather than conform to patriarchal law. Loren's first appearance on screen parodies the traditional presentation of the female body, as the camera pans to her legs and then tilts up to reveal the rest of her body as she sits behind her table selling cigarettes. She subsequently stands with her back to the camera

then quickly turns to reveal her pregnant belly, both playing with classical iconography and the spectator's expectations. Moreover, Adelina proudly flaunts the unruliness of her motherly curves, particularly in one of the film's most elaborately filmed sequences. After the lawyer Verace has informed Carmine and Adelina that the latter's pregnancy impedes her incarceration—*tene 'a panza,* literally translated as "she's got the belly"—news spreads quickly throughout the streets. The scene culminates in Adelina's triumphant parade around the neighborhood, as she proudly displays her protruding belly, swinging her arms and hips as she holds her head high. The accompanying music crescendos into a loud, vivacious march with horns and drums, deliberately referencing her infamous parade as the *pizzaiola* in *The Gold of Naples.* The sequence is filmed mostly in medium-long and long shots so as to capture both the body and the environment (i.e., the public and the private) within the same frame, integrating the performative display of the female body with an essential component of Neapolitan culture: the *passeggiata.* I have already discussed how the *passeggiata* signaled the moment of display and performance of masculinity for the *bella figura* (see chapter 1). Adelina appropriates those very conventions for femininity by parading its most visible sign—her belly—within the context of the *bella figura*'s very public display of the private self on the streets of Naples.

This association between the city and the maternal body echoes another important text in Neapolitan culture: Matilde Serao's *Il ventre di Napoli* (The Belly of Naples, 1884), a series of articles that Serao, an accomplished author of fiction and journalism, intended as a response to Prime Minister Agostino Depretis's declaration that "Naples must be gutted" (the Italian word is *sventrare*) after the recent cholera epidemic. The Italian word *ventre,* from the Latin *venter,* has several meanings, from the generic "belly" or "stomach" to the more female-specific "uterus" or "womb." *Il ventre di Napoli,* in line with what Laura Salsini has called Serao's "realist revisions," aims to elucidate Naples's social and economic problems rather than smooth them over into a typical tourist-like vision of the city: to remake (*rifare*) rather than gut (*sventrare*) the so-called underbelly of Naples.[36] In order to render the horror of turn-of-the-century proletarian Neapolitan life, Serao often refers to the plight of its female population. But, rather than just delineate its miserable state, she also recounts tales of solidarity, particularly in relation to motherhood and the female/maternal body: how one nursing mother, for example, helped feed the child of another mother whose milk had dried up; and how one woman would bring a friend's baby to her to be nursed at work.[37] The maternal body for Serao is seen as a site



25. Adelina (Loren) peddles her wares in the first sequence of Vittorio De Sica's *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (1963). From the author's private collection.

of hope for the future of Naples, through female solidarity and the restorative powers of the lactating female body in light of the indifference displayed by the dominant (read patriarchal) order.

The lactating female body also enables Adelina's rebellion against authority. When the police patrol the street where she sells her stolen wares, she defiantly declares, showing her baby attached to her breast, "I still have five more months." Demonstrating her insubordination with both speech and body, Adelina appropriates the traditional tools of female domestication as a means of her own empowerment. Rowe notes how Bakhtin and others have aligned the maternal body with the grotesque, and thus marginalized it in terms of its transgressive power (33–34). The unruly woman, however, uses this monstrous body precisely as a source of power, with Adelina constituting the perfect example of how the maternal body, so central to the preservation of social order, can subvert that very authority.

In the face of this power, Carmine, like the law itself, is left powerless. Already metaphorically castrated by his inability to find work, Carmine assumes the traditionally feminine position from the beginning: it is he, as much if not more than Adelina, who is seen taking care of the children, even when she is not in prison. His weakened status is further

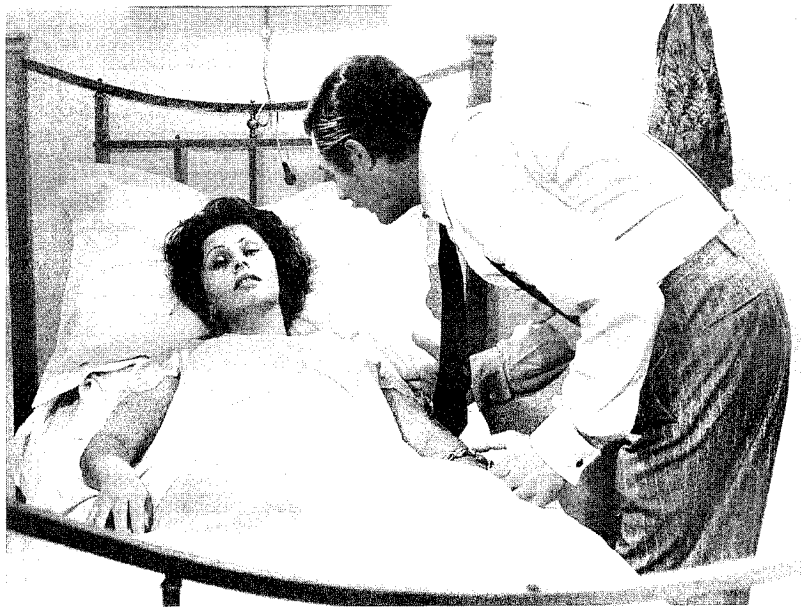
26. The lactating female body enables Adelina's rebellion. Courtesy of Photofest.

threatened by his inability to impregnate Adelina for an eighth time. Thus, the sole proof of his masculinity—his ability to sire children—disappears. This emphasis on and preoccupation with paternity also plays a significant part in *Marriage—Italian Style,* as Mastroianni's character, Domenico Soriano, becomes a pawn in Filumena's plans to give her illegitimate sons a name. In this De Sica film, Filumena Marturano, a former prostitute, tricks her long-time lover Domenico into marrying her as she pretends to be on her deathbed. Flashbacks explicate their twenty-year relationship, focusing on how Domenico has taken advantage of Filumena: how he set her up in her own apartment (only to cheat a deserving family out of it), persuaded her to run his bakery business and care for his demanding elderly mother, all the while leaving her for long stretches of time and cheating on her with a series of cashiers at his café. When an outraged Domenico refuses to accept their marriage and moves to have it legally annulled, Filumena informs him that she has secretly been supporting three illegitimate sons, and that one of them is in fact his, but she will not tell him which one. Domenico then becomes obsessed with ascertaining paternity, approaching each of the boys secretly to establish who most resembles

him. Ultimately, he confronts Filumena, who keeps him guessing as to which one is his offspring. A frustrated Domenico physically attacks her, but his violent grasp soon becomes romantic, and the film concludes with their marriage, attended by the three sons, still without the revelation of paternity.

Marriage—Italian Style differs from its original source play in two significant ways. First, Sophia Loren plays the lead instead of the actress for whom the role was originally written and with whom it was most identified: the author's sister, Titina de Filippo, who had recently passed away and to whom the film is dedicated. Although clearly designed to be a Loren vehicle (Ponti even insisted to De Sica at one point that Loren have more close-ups than Mastroianni), Titina de Filippo's ghost weighed heavily on the production, particularly in its sense of theatricality that De Sica tried at all costs to purge from what he intended to be a purely cinematic story.[38] Second, using precisely the language of cinema, De Sica incorporated flashbacks in order to flesh out the backstory of the relationship between Filumena and Domenico. And, although the film preserves the strong Neapolitan anchoring of the play (yet tempering Domenico's use of dialect), it mutes its social criticism of the plight of illegitimacy (a subject of importance to the illegitimate de Filippo) in favor of a rosier American-style romantic comedy.[39]

The film's narrative pivots around the trick Filumena plays to entrap Domenico in marriage: Filumena is being carried up the stairs of her apartment building in a chair, so close is she to death's door. Instead of calling a doctor, she asks Domenico to summon a priest, and much to his surprise he soon finds himself kneeling on the floor with the priest blessing their marriage *in extremis.* Once the marriage is a fait accompli, Domenico telephones his fiancée Diana to inform her of Filumena's impending demise. Standing screen right in front of a deep red curtain, he is soon interrupted by a resurrected Filumena, who angrily reveals her deception. She then proceeds to the kitchen to eat and celebrate her triumph, unleashing twenty years of anger at Domenico for taking advantage of her "situation"—the fact that her past as a prostitute prevents her from ever becoming an honest woman. Loren's disheveled appearance in this scene reinforces her status as unruly woman: in a major departure from the traditional iconography of the *maggiorata fisica,* she appears to wear no makeup, is dressed in an unflattering nightgown, and has unkempt hair. Her movements, as she screams at Domenico while shoving food in her face, betray the unleashing of the shrew's wrath. The combination of anger and food links the mouth with the unruly woman's excess: the gluttonous and the garrulous. The color red,



27. Filumena (Loren) pretends to be on death's door to trick Domenico (Mastroianni) into marriage in *Marriage—Italian Style* (1964). From the author's private collection.

long associated with the feminine, figures prominently in the mise-en-scène: in the curtain as well as the robe Filumena wears on her first morning as Signora Soriano, highlighting the power of the unruly woman as she revels in her triumph.

Thus Domenico, like Snàporaz before him, becomes the object of the female-manipulated Boccacian *beffa* (see chapter 4), which assumes a more subversive nature because of the infusion of anger in its configuration. For Rowe, anger combines with the joke to form "transgressive laughter," whereby "women both initiate the joke and complete it with their laughter" (17). The unruly woman becomes what Boccaccio might call the *beffatrice* (female joker), using *ingegno* to obtain what she wants: here, a father for her sons. Even though Domenico succeeds in having the marriage annulled, Filumena cunningly transforms the *beffa*/joke into the riddle of his paternity, strategically feeding him clues but then contradicting herself. Yet Domenico never learns which son is his, despite a futile interrogation of the three before the wedding. The wedding scene itself, recounted as a series of semi-still frames designed to evoke a wedding album, reinforces Domenico's lack of certainty: three

28. Food and anger fuel the unruly woman's wrath in *Marriage—Italian Style.* Courtesy of Photofest.

"photographs" have him looking at each of the boys, trying to discern similarities. Thus, by remaining in control of both the joke, and, consequently, the narrative, Loren as unruly woman succeeds again in both subsuming Mastroianni's character into the patriarchal order and preserving her status as the woman on top.

Underlying this power shift is the gradual emergence of the woman in the 1960s as increasingly independent, preceding what Paul Ginsborg has called the era of collective action from 1968 to 1973.[40] Both Adelina and Filumena, more than Lina and Antonietta, occupy public space in a progressively assertive way: Adelina by bringing the maternal and the domestic into the public, and Filumena as working woman who leaves her prostitute days behind in favor of legitimate hard work to provide for her illegitimate children. The repercussions of this public emergence in the historically masculine sphere, particularly within the context of Southern Italy, speak to a threatened masculinity, evident in these Mastroianni *inetti:* both Carmelo's inability to perform sexually and Domenico's inability to solve the riddle of paternity, forsake, especially in the latter's case, the traditional mechanisms of narrative closure and the restoration of patriarchal order. Moreover, the unruly woman comes to dominate the male through an increasingly desexualized body. The exaggerated body of the *maggiorate fisiche* has become the downright dowdy body of the middle-aged woman: the unruly

29. Domenico attempts to ascertain which of Filumena's sons is his. From the author's private collection.

woman has forsaken her position as sexualized object of the gaze in favor of an inversion of both the social and economic order. Loren and Mastroianni's most critically successful film of the subsequent decade would further exploit this de-iconicization, as it simultaneously distanced itself from and relied on the unruly woman/*inetto* coupling.

The 1970s: *A Special Day* and the Woman on Top

In the 1970s, filmmakers hoping to capitalize on the previous successes of the Loren/Mastroianni coupling released several films which were intended for both national and international audiences: Dino Risi's *La moglie del prete* (The Priest's Wife, 1970), with Loren as a singer and Mastroianni as a priest with whom she falls in love; Giorgio Capitani's *La pupa del gangster* (The Gangster's Moll, 1975), in which she played another ex-prostitute and he the gangster; and Lina Wertmüller's *Fatto di sangue fra due uomini per causa di una vedova—si sospettano motivi politici* (Blood Feud, 1979), about, as the Italian title explains, two men who fall in love with a widow. While some of these films played well at the

box office, most were critical failures. Their most significant collaboration of this period in terms of critical praise and international success, Ettore Scola's *A Special Day,* radically departs from the romantic comedy formula set above: like the Wertmüller film, it is a drama set during the Fascist period, with Loren as a frumpy Mussolini-loving housewife and Mastroianni as a gay anti-Fascist radio announcer. What is interesting about this film is how it nevertheless draws on the codes and conventions established in the unruly woman comedies described above, particularly in the film's "climactic" sexual resolution.

A Special Day takes place on May 6, 1938, during Hitler's visit to Rome. It tracks the encounter of two people who do not attend the occasion's parades and spectacles: Antonietta (Loren), an uneducated mother and housewife, and an avid supporter of the Fascist regime; and Gabriele (Mastroianni), a well-educated gay radio announcer opposed to Fascism. Scola's film efficiently implodes the gender mythologies through which the Fascist regime attempted to impose cultural and political conformity, with Antonietta as the quintessential *donna madre* (maternal woman) as opposed to the materialistic, sterile *donna crisi* (crisis woman).[41] Antonietta is mother to six healthy children, fulfilling her "innate feminine" calling as well as her public duty as proper Fascist citizen. In her extended conversation with Gabriele, she proudly comments that if she has one more child, she is eligible for a government prize during the Mother's and Child's Day celebration in Rome, initiated in 1933 in order to propagandize the regime's demographic politics. Her life, however, does not provide the rewarding fulfillment of the regime's conceptualization of female subjectivity. Antonietta's family resources are stretched beyond their limits. The filmmakers' effective camera work visually reveals the burden of Antonietta's familial responsibilities. Our first introduction to the family is a two-minute, one-shot sequence as the camera follows Antonietta's movements and actions as she wakes her husband and her children on the morning of the parade. As she weaves her way in and out of the tiny rooms and the makeshift room dividers, we discover one child after another hiding among the apartment's cracks and crevices.

Antonietta had blindly accepted the gender and sexual constructions expected of her. Gabriele, by contrast, is forced to consciously assume them in order to escape persecution. Little ambiguity existed during the Fascist period in the cultural configuration of the deviant. The negative other, assigned to the category of the degenerate, included hermaphrodites, androgynes, masturbators, criminals, lesbians, and homosexuals. Sodomy in particular came to symbolize the confusion of the sexes and sexual excess; it was perceived as a conspiratorial

secret practice the consequences of which were depopulation, disease, and political subversion.[42] Specific legislation reinforced the regime's social and sexual fear of the degenerate homosexual threat: in 1926 the government imposed the infamous bachelor tax—a punitive tax on those adult males who were not yet married—and in 1931 all homosexual acts were officially outlawed. As opposed to the regime in Nazi Germany, however, the Italian government did not set out on a programmed elimination of homosexuals. Rather, as Ruth Ben-Ghiat has recently argued, the government aimed to sequester and reform those labeled as deviants in an effort to cure Italy of degeneracy. For Ben-Ghiat, this project of *bonifica* (reclamation) was integral to the Fascist project of national regeneration and the restoration of international prestige through colonial expansion, cultural practices, and modernist visions.[43]

What ultimately dooms Gabriele in *A Special Day* is his inability to successfully recite the role of the happy, healthy heterosexual. Scola employs the figure of the homosexual not as a means of vilifying or demonizing Fascism, as is the case, for example, with Roberto Rossellini's *Roma, città aperta* (Open City, 1945) or Bernardo Bertolucci's *Il conformista* (The Conformist, 1970), but, rather, as a means of demystifying the Fascist myth of virility which formed the basis for much of the movement's rhetorical power. Unlike most post-war depictions of the era, here the homosexual is neither a Fascist, nor does he possess any of the traditional, iconic signs associated with cinematic representations of homosexuality, such as excessive femininity, exaggerated flamboyance, or "perversion." Scola appears to counter this negative tendency by means of what Richard Dyer sees as the shift from the act of homosexuality to characterization: in other words, by showing that homosexuals are, in fact, like everyone else.[44]

The irony of *A Special Day* rests in the fact that a man who is far from the virile image that Fascism and Mussolini attempted to project sexually satisfies the ideal Fascist woman. By contrast, the sexual union draws on both traditional cinematic constructions and extra-cinematic expectations. In the classical paradigm, the heterosexual coupling/union constitutes the natural form of closure to the text as it resolves the gender conflicts raised in the film's narrative. The audience assumes Mastroianni's and Loren's characters will become romantically involved, because of the actors' long history of collaboration in the romantic comedies analyzed above. Each had come to symbolize Italian eroticism for both a national and international audience. In fact, the promotional copy in the American newspaper advertisements played on this very ex-

30. Gabriele (Mastroianni) comforts Antonietta (Loren) in Ettore Scola's *A Special Day*. From the author's private collection.

pectation. It reads "Loren and Mastroianni together again in a very special movie."

The climactic love scene, while seeming to departing from the traditionally romanticized Loren/Mastroianni couplings in its style, nevertheless physically incorporates the idea of the "woman-on-top," as it is Antonietta who assumes the traditionally masculine position as initiator of the sexual act. What destabilizes this sexual inversion is that, unlike unruly women such as Mae West or Marlene Dietrich, Loren does not possess signs of masculinity, such as West's husky voice or Dietrich's cross-dressing. Despite the fact that the filmmakers purposely tried to make Sophia Loren look unattractive to counter her star persona—she wore little or no makeup to accentuate the bags under her eyes and dressed in ragged clothes—she still exudes femininity and, in this scene, uncontrolled female sexuality. Shot predominantly as a series of close-ups and medium shots, the sequence underscores Antonietta's awakening passion in contrast to Gabriele's physically rigid passivity: as she takes the lead in their love-making, low-angle shots emphasize her libidinous power, while Gabriele's facial expression subliminally relays both pain and pleasure. And, although Gabriele eventually succumbs to sexual arousal, his is devoid of the cathartic release that Antonietta experiences. The homosexual, although heterosexually competent, re-

mains the sexual *inetto* in traditionally masculine terms, dominated by the woman on top.

Part of a spate of 1970s films which examined Italy's Fascist legacy, *A Special Day* both draws on and departs from the cinematic paradigms established in earlier Loren/Mastroianni collaborations. The film succeeds in examining and dismantling the Fascist constructions of male sexuality and in countering representational stereotypes of homosexuality. The counterpoint sound of patriotic Fascist music, which had been blaring throughout the film but reaches its crescendo during the sex scene, further destabilizes the heterosexual ideal in its departure from the traditional string symphonies accompanying the classic coupling. It fails to give Antonietta the happy end of her (heterosexual) romantic fantasies: Gabriele is led off into internal exile, and Antonietta returns to her role as Fascist mother and wife. Homosexuality, although not converted, is contained and re-inscribed along heterosexual lines by the figure of the unruly woman, but those very lines in the long run are ambiguous at best.

Because Mastroianni and Loren proved to be a successful commercial pairing on both a national and international level with even mediocre films, one wonders what would have happened had one project proposed to them gotten off the ground: the film adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, which eventually starred Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton. Franco Zeffirelli, the film's director, approached Loren about teaming with Mastroianni, but the latter declined the role, citing his poor English.[45] Shakespeare's comedy, in reality, might have been a perfect fit for the pair. First, the text, like the Mastroianni/Loren films, takes a realistic middle-class setting as the point of departure for a social commentary on the constructed nature of gender and the social order. Second, for Coppélia Kahn, Shakespeare's play satirizes the male urge to control women by showing that patriarchal authority is authenticated by female subjugation to it, in this case Kate's seemingly complete devotion and submission to Petruchio's will.[46] Similarly, the Mastroianni/Loren films, through the carnivalesque figure of the unruly woman who inverts the gender hierarchy, reveal the *inetto* behind the mask of Italian patriarchal masculinity. Finally, as Kate merely plays the role of dutiful wife, the play literally "plays" with the very notion of "play" itself. This idea of playing a part in the social order, reinforced by the many self-reflexive elements in the drama and by the unruly woman's use of ironic speech and performance in the Mastroianni/Loren films, furthers the notion of the world turned upside-down by the ever-increasing public presence of women

and the repercussions for traditional constructions of Italian masculinity.

Mastroianni's and Loren's final appearance on screen together in Robert Altman's *Prêt-à-Porter* (1994), the second of only two American films that Mastroianni would make in his career, proves an important transitional text, because it takes the Loren/Mastroianni comedic formula and introduces a factor which characterizes the production of Mastroianni's final films: aging and masculinity. A parody of the fashion world with an ensemble cast, the film, in a rather unbelievable subplot humorously referencing *Sunflower*, features Mastroianni as a fervid young Italian communist (Sergio) who had left his young wife Isabella (Loren) to go to Moscow in the 1950s, but lost touch with her in the confusion after Stalin's death. She went on to marry Olivier de la Fontaine, the current chairman of the French fashion council, whom she has now come to despise because of his extra-marital affairs. Sergio returns forty years later to find Isabella, first by arranging a meeting with her husband, who suddenly chokes on his ham sandwich and dies. De la Fontaine's chauffeur accuses Sergio of strangling him, and Sergio flees. Sergio, furtively hiding in clothes stolen from various hotel rooms, finally finds Isabella, and they agree to meet. They retreat to another one of Sergio's purloined rooms, and while Isabella seductively begins to remove her clothing, an exhausted Sergio falls asleep.

Altman's use of Loren and Mastroianni in his critique of the vacuity and ridiculousness of haute couture is, like many of the actors' films examined in this study, highly self-referential. The fashion industry plays an integral role in its representation: the film features designers playing themselves (Christian Lacroix, Sonia Rykiel, and Jean-Paul Gautier, among others) and showcasing their collections, and those designers played by actors had their collections created by fashion houses such as Nino Cerruti and Vivienne Westwood.[47] The presence of Loren and Mastroianni references their status as icons of Italian style: she for her patronage of high fashion (her long associations with Christian Dior, Gianfranco Ferre, and Giorgio Armani) as well as her own foray into the accessories world with her line of eyeglasses, and he, as discussed in chapter 2, for his association with the new Italian men's fashion which emerged in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In addition, Altman wanted them to recreate a scene from one of their earlier films, but it had to be something with which an international audience would be familiar.[48] They chose the third episode of *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, in which Loren plays Mara, one of the many cinematic incarnations of the prostitute with the golden heart, who promises to take a vow of celibacy for one week if she can convince her young neighbor

31. The famous striptease sequence from the third episode of *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow.* Courtesy of Photofest.

(Umberto, played by Gianni Ridolfi) to return to the seminary and reject the impure world. As her loyal client on a visit from Bologna, Mastroianni's character (Augusto Rusconi) is the victim of frustrated desire three times: after Mara is insulted by Umberto's grandmother; after the grandmother begs Mara's forgiveness and asks for her help; and when, during a provocative striptease to the popular song from the 1960s "La luce blu," she remembers her vow and forces Augusto to pray rather than lay with her.

In the De Sica film, Loren as unruly woman frustrates the male's desire, and he is powerless in the face of her decision. In Altman's version, it is the unruly woman's sexuality that remains unsatisfied by the aging *inetto* man. Altman recreates the scene to its very last detail: Mastroianni's position on the bed, his animal sounds of pleasure at the spectacle of the striptease, "La luce blu," and Loren's black-lace bustier and garter belt (albeit this time over a body stocking). The fact that Sergio has fallen asleep in the face of such an open display of female sexuality speaks to two important themes that run through the final decades of Mastroianni's career. First, unlike his American contemporaries, Mastroianni never made any attempts to counter the effects of aging in

32. Loren recreates the striptease in Robert Altman's *Prêt-à-Porter* (1994). From the author's private collection.

his appearance. In *Prêt-à-Porter* (and other films), he appears as the seventy-year-old man he was, in contrast to Sophia Loren, who consistently takes pains to appear as young as possible in her films. Second, by turning to a past text for inspiration, one associated with Mastroianni's younger years, *Prêt-à-Porter* evokes a sense of nostalgia for a time gone by. This nostalgia for the past is a common theme in Mastroianni's final films, one that evokes simpler times, when the world was not turned upside down by the unruly woman and changing gender roles.