



REFRAMING LUCHINO VISCONTI

FILM AND ART

Ivo Blom

CLUES

INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES IN CULTURE, HISTORY AND HERITAGE

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REFRAMING LUCHINO VISCONTI



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LUCHINO VISCONTI**

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This book is dedicated to Piero Tosi, Mario Garbuglia and Giuseppe Rotunno.

Introduction: Intervisuality, Theory and History

The year 2006 commemorated the births of Mozart and Rembrandt, as well as the centenary of the filmmaker, Luchino Visconti (1906-1976), and his death thirty years before. It prompted the Milanese publisher Federica Olivares and me to organize a seminar on Visconti and visual culture where we screened the restored version of his historical drama, *Senso* (1954). This event took place in the beautiful ballroom of Palazzo Visconti in Milan where the young Count Visconti di Modrone grew up.¹ This richly decorated and ornate environment seduced Francesco Casetti, then professor at Milan's Università Cattolica, into saying that if we wanted to characterize Visconti with a word, it would have to be *monumentality*. Monuments typically invoke such adjectives as *impressive*, *memorable*, *historical* but also, *inevitable* and perhaps *weighty*. Casetti's statement was *touché*, because, it may be asked: who dares to write a book about a filmmaker about whom so many books have already been written? Biographies, scientific studies, coffee table books: it's all there and in abundance. Despite the surfeit of riches, however, our seminar clearly indicated that at least one methodological approach had not been fully appreciated by film scholars.

From *Ossessione* (*Obsession*, 1943) onward, Visconti made history with movies like *La terra trema* (*The Earth Trembles*, 1948), *Senso*, *Rocco and His Brothers* (*Rocco e i suoi fratelli*, 1960), *The Leopard* (*Il Gattopardo*, 1963), *The Damned*, (*La caduta degli dei* 1969), *Death in Venice* (*Morte a Venezia*, 1971), and *Ludwig* (1972), films that were often based on European literary classics and which offered innovative interpretations of nineteenth and twentieth-century history.² In addition, Visconti was one of the most important innovators of the post-war Italian stage. He introduced Italy to the modern French and American repertory of Jean Cocteau, Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller. He staged opera performances with the legendary Maria Callas. Despite the post-structuralist deconstruction of the author, Visconti still – and perhaps increasingly – stands on a pedestal in any study of European cinema. This is evident especially from the plethora of French and Italian publications and conferences. Visconti's films are now almost all restored, reintroduced into circulation, and on DVD – this has facilitated analysis of his

1 See also the additional essay released at the time, Ivo Blom, *Visconti e le arti visive/Visconti and Visual Arts* (Milano: Olivares Edizioni, 2006), with an introduction by Caterina D'Amico.

2 In this book, the English film titles will be used for *White Nights*, *Rocco and His Brothers*, *The Leopard*, *The Damned*, *Death in Venice* and *Conversation Piece*, and Italian titles for all other films. This follows the division made by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith's *Luchino Visconti* (London: BFI, 2003).

work.³ The films are by no means outdated. The Fondazione Gramsci in Rome, curator of Visconti's professional legacy, not only made accessible his archival collection of scenarios, contracts, letters and such, but also has published a three-volume comprehensive bibliography of works by and about Visconti, entitled *biblioVisconti*.⁴

When watching one of Visconti's films, one is always struck by the sheer beauty, the rich detail, and the pictoriality of his images. As spectators we have the sensation of walking through a living picture, cultivated through Visconti's predilection for visual exploration, in which characters often function as stand-ins for us, the spectators. But where does this spectacular imagery come from? This is this book's core question, though a complex one because Visconti's films are *Gesamtkunstwerke*, continuous and all-embracing artistic projects, which are forged from different media, each with their own language. This is because he alternated filmmaking with directing stage plays and operas, and because he often based his films on classic nineteenth and twentieth century European literature that he greatly admired. Moreover, music played an important role in Visconti's films and he paid great attention to it during the production process. Studies, biographies and interviews with Visconti and his staff have revealed the role of theatre, literature, and music in his work. More obscure, though, is the role of painting. Both critics and Visconti's intimates agree that his images are living paintings, *tableaux vivants*, that are not just *l'art pour l'art*, but perform key functions in both narrative and character development. But where do these images come from? How are they created? And within which aesthetic traditions or innovations should we consider them?

The pictoriality in Visconti's films manifests itself in three particular areas: art direction, costume design, and cinematography. The most apparent concern within this approach is the issue of pictorial citation (citation of paintings in films). Visconti's use of it (though infrequent) reveals his stylistic choices and helps to explain *why* they would show up in particular places within his films. He used painting more often indirectly – covertly. In the pre-production or production phase, Visconti gave his staff explicit references to artists or works of art that would express his idea on a certain filmic element: e.g., the costume of a character. His staff would also use art as documentation to reconstruct the past. Visconti used art on his sets not only as interchangeable, decorative parts, but also as

3 In 2005 Dutch distributor Cinemien released a DVD box with five Visconti films, for which I wrote an introductory text. This box included the first worldwide DVD release of *L'innocente* (1976). The last Visconti DVDs that appeared in Italy were those of *Senso* (2007) and *Vaghe stelle dell'Orsa* (2009). Only *Lo straniero* (1967) and the episode film *Le streghe* (1967) fail, as well as the collective documentary *Giorni di gloria* (1945) and the non-fiction short *Appunti su un fatto di cronaca* (1953). In the US, The Criterion Collection has released *Senso*, *White Nights* and *The Leopard* in deluxe editions. In the mean time Blue-rays have appeared too, including the 4k restoration of *The Leopard* (Criterion 2010). See <http://www.criterion.com/people/8886-luchino-visconti>.

4 Antonella Montesi ed., *biblioVisconti, vol. 1* (Roma: Scuola Nazionale del Cinema/ Fondazione Istituto Gramsci, 2001); idem, *biblioVisconti, vol. 2* (Roma: Scuola Nazionale del Cinema/ Fondazione Istituto Gramsci, 2004); idem, *biblioVisconti, vol. 3* (Roma: Scuola Nazionale del Cinema/ Fondazione Istituto Gramsci, 2009). For volume 3 I coordinated the research on the Dutch and German written publications for which Daniël Singelenberg (Amsterdam) and Ulrich Döge (Berlin) did the research.

meaningful props and catalysts within the narrative. This also includes painted and photographed portraits. Pictoriality is strongly represented in the staging and framing of his images. His staging in depth, his use of framing (with the film frame echoed in windows, doors and vistas), and his use of mirrors are clearly rooted in aesthetic traditions derived from painting. At the same time, framing and staging also have their cinematic traditions, even if they might derive from traditions in other media such as theatre. With their remarkable tracking shots and zooms, and with the techniques of temporarily blocking or filtering characters, Visconti's films even deviate from painting. Mobile framing strongly relates to the historical development of cinema itself, even if camera panning has its precedents in panoramic painting. More narrowly, this can also be contextualized by Visconti's early film career, and his familiarity with European cinema, particularly – but not exclusively – that of Jean Renoir. Tracing of Visconti's imagery can be done on different levels that can be hard to conceptualize. Can we find a theoretical framework, a model or concepts to explain what is happening here?

Appropriation, pictorial references and *ekphrasis*

Appropriation, as defined within the new art history, is a key concept in this study. In *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts* (2008), James O. Young distinguishes three categories of appropriation: *object*, *subject* and *content appropriation*.⁵ This study focuses on the third, content appropriation (appropriation of ideas), under which Young also groups *style appropriation* and *motif appropriation*. One can thereby speak of 'influence' whether intentionally transferred or not. The idea of painters or painting influencing filmmakers, though, has been criticized. When dealing with cultural appropriation Young states that the 'giving' party are 'insiders' while the 'taking' party are 'outsiders', thus implying that the former is the most important. In *Patterns of Intentions* (1985), however, Michael Baxandall claims that we should reverse this movement: "influence' is a curse of art criticism primarily because of its wrong-headed grammatical prejudice about who is the agent and who the patient: it seems to reverse the active/passive relation which the historical actor experiences and the inferential beholder will wish to take into account. If one says that X influenced Y it does seem that one is saying that X did something to Y rather than Y did something to X'. If we rather conceive of Y instead of X as *agent*, then the vocabulary becomes much richer, more attractive, more varied.⁶

According to Baxandall, thinking in terms of influence and its basis, the classic concept of causality ossifies because it impoverishes the possibilities in differentiation. Baxandall uses the metaphor of billiard balls on an American pool table. The *cue ball* is not X (the original artwork or artist) but Y (the appropriator). Every time Y deliberately hits X, all balls are rearranged, and form new relations to each other. In terms of artistic influence, when dealing with pictorial quotations, it might be that the *citation* modifies our notion of the original painting instead of the other way around. The first chapter will analyse this in the pictorial quotation of

5 James O. Young, *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2008), pp. 5-9.

6 Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention. On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 58-60.

the romantic historicist painting, *Il bacio* (1859) by Francesco Hayez, in Visconti's historical film *Senso*. When researching this cultural appropriation, we cannot stop at formal resemblances though we often will start there. The historical trajectories between painting and film also need to be investigated. How is it possible that certain images are privileged over others, and migrate from and resurface in other media but in transformed and reconfigured ways? Has the original meaning changed and, if so, why and what is left of it? Finally, does this changed meaning alter our understanding of the original artwork?

Baxandall's approach seems related to the New Historicist reaction against historical teleology, that is, against a linear reading of history that neglects alternative possibilities. In the 1970s and 1980s resistance rose against this approach as it often involved a *chronological-organic model* (childhood/maternity/decline) or a *chronological-teleological model* (a development towards ever greater filmic realism or mastery of technical means). This was the main critique against the art historian Anne Hollander's study, *Moving Pictures* (1989), in which she argued figurative – here Northern European – painting used techniques and concepts that preceded the language of cinema.⁷ Hollander rightly indicated, however, how important *reproduction* was as an intermediate state to explain cinema's appropriation of painting: 'This proto-cinematic art was mostly created by painters. But in large part the emotional effects that were most telling in their paintings and most deeply internalized by the public, and that eventually found their way into cinema, first reached the hearts of their viewers though the medium of reproduction'.⁸ This matches my argument about *Il bacio*, in which reproduction is an important missing link between painting and citation in *Senso*. Hollander was also one of the first to analyse the formal qualities of Northern European painting – light & shadow, colour, composition, staging in depth, framing, etc. – and relate these to cinematic *mise en scène* and framing. While her teleological approach was criticized by Glass (2003), Dalle Vacche (1996), and Mills (2001), others objected to the contrast between her vast knowledge on painting and the relative paucity of her discussion on cinema.⁹ Some film or art historians sought to fill in this gap. They did closer research on the Baxandallian appropriation of figurative painting in cinema, either in the formal and aesthetic ways similar to Hollander, e.g., in analysing cinematic framing and staging (Bellocchio, 2005; Zagarrio, 1993; Bernardi, 2002; Aumont, 2007/1989; Costa, 2006; Salt, 1992; Brewster, 1992; Deleuze, 2005; Thompson,

7 Anne Hollander, *Moving Pictures* (New York: Knopf, 1989).

8 Hollander 1989, p. 4. On the importance of reproduction for quotation and iconicity, see my article, 'Quo vadis? From Painting to Cinema and Everthing in Between', in: Leonardo Quaresima, Laura Vichi eds., *La decima musa. Il cinema e le altre arti/ The Tenth Muse. Cinema and other arts* (Udine: Forum, 2001), p. 281-96, republished in: Richard Abel ed., *Early Cinema: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2014), vol. III, pp. 9-22. In reworked version in Dutch as 'Gérôme en Quo Vadis? Picturale invloeden in de film', *Jong Holland* 4, 2001, p. 19-28.

9 Marguerite Ann Glass, Ch. 2, 'Appropriation', *Vermeer in Dialogue: From Appropriation to Response* (diss. University of Maryland, 2003), pp. 21-53. Angela Dalle Vacche, 'Introduction', *Cinema and Painting: How Art Is Used in Film* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), pp. 8-11. Jane Mills, 'Light! Camera! Painbrush!', *Senses of Cinema* 18 (December 2001), <http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/01/18/paint.html>.

1988)¹⁰ or in the use of quotations in early cinema (Blom, 1992, 2001/2013),¹¹ or in classical Hollywood cinema portraiture from the 1940s (Sykora, 2003; Felleman, 2006; Jacobs, 2011).¹² These contributions laid the groundwork for my analysis of Visconti's use and appropriation of painting in his films.

David Bordwell wrote in *On the History of Film Style*: 'In 1947, in his hugely popular *Le musée imaginaire*, [André] Malraux [...] argued that the doctrines of the turn-of-the-century modernism, according to which the creator dominated reality by means of a style, were valid only for a brief moment in the history of art. The cinema, he claimed, was heir to the long tradition of descriptive painting. While modernism liberated painting from narrative demands, cinema took over those illustrative purposes that had been paramount from the Renaissance to the end of the nineteenth century. Malraux thereby implied that cinéphiles had erred in trying to align film with modernism. The sound cinema was pledged to realism by its very place in the history of the visual arts'.¹³ While this assertion needs to be nuanced, Malraux does stand close to Hollander's claim about figurative painting's anticipation of fiction film, and to Bazin's claim that cinema is a 'realist' medium. As Visconti's cinema shows, however, style and reality are *both* very prominent, and the balance can move back and forth, for example, in his alternation of deep staging and compressed spaces in films like *La terra trema* (see Chapter 9).¹⁴

In her dissertation, *Vermeer in Dialogue: From Appropriation to Response* (2003), Marguerite Ann Glass researched the ways in which painters, writers and filmmakers have appropriated the work of the seventeenth century Dutch painter, Johannes Vermeer.¹⁵ From a theoretical and art historical perspective, she investigated the trajectory from high art to popular culture. Yet, despite her invocation of

10 Letizia Bellocchio, 'Identificazione e straniamento in *Ossessione* e *La terra trema*', in: Letizia Bellocchio, Mauro Giori, Tomaso Subini eds., *Guarda bene, fratello, guarda bene. Kubrick, Pasolini, Visconti* (Milano: CUEM, 2005), pp. 53-67. Vito Zagarrìo, 'Le "quinte" della storia: riflessioni sulla regia', in: Lino Micciché ed., *La terra trema di Luchino Visconti. Analisi di un capolavoro*, (Roma/Torino: Associazione Philip Morris Progetto Cinema/CSC/Lindau, 1993), pp. 117-39. Sandro Bernardi, *Il paesaggio nel cinema italiano* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2002). Jacques Aumont, *L'œil interminable* (Paris: La Différence, 2007/ Paris: Séguier, 1989). Antonio Costa, 'Finestre sullo schermo', in: Letizia Bellocchio ed., *Finestre. Atti della Scuola Europea di Studi Comparati* (Firenze: le Monnier, 2006), pp. 79-91. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1. The Movement-Image / Cinema 2. The Time-Image* (London/New York: Continuum, 2005). Barry Salt, *Film Style & Technology: History & Analysis* (London: Starword, 1992). Ben Brewster, 'Deep Staging in French Films, 1900-1914', in T. Elsaesser, A. Barker eds., *Early cinema: space-frame-narrative* (London: BFI, 1992), pp. 45-55. Kristin Thompson, *Breaking the Glass Armor. Neoformalist Film Analysis* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988). See also Ben Brewster, Lea Jacobs, *Theatre to Cinema. Stage Pictorialism and the Early Feature Film* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

11 Ivo Blom, 'Il Fuoco or the Fatal Portrait. The XIXth Century in the Italian Silent Cinema'. *Le portrait peint au cinéma. Iris* no. 14-15, Autumn 1992, pp. 55-66. See also Blom 2001.

12 Susan Felleman, *Art in the Cinematic Imagination*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006. Steven Jacobs, *Framing Pictures. Film and the Visual Arts*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011. Katharina Sykora, *As You Desire me. Das Bildnis im Film*. Cologne: Walther König, 2003. Ivo Blom, 'Of Artists and Models. Painters and Sculptors in Italian Silent Cinema', *Acta Sapientiae Universitatis. Film and Media Studies* 7 (2013), pp. 97-110.

13 David Bordwell, *On the History of Film Style* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 49.

14 Cf. Bazin's analysis of Welles's one-shot sequences, deep staging and deep focus, which Bazin links with a general development of the filmic language in the late 1930s and 1940s, also traceable in the films of Renoir and Visconti. André Bazin, *What is cinema?*, vol. I (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 33-8.

15 Glass (2003).

Baxandall, she kept the conventional point of departure of classic art influencing cinema instead of the Baxandallian reversal of film appropriating art. Indeed, is it even possible to opt for an art historical perspective and to keep Baxandall's reversal of direction? Shouldn't one begin with the appropriating medium, say a film-historical or film-theoretical perspective? But doesn't this risk only analysing the appropriator's (filmmaker) intentions rather than the appropriated medium (painting)? Pictorial references in Visconti's set and costume design can often be explained in pragmatic and biographical ways, or be related to the professional traditions of his collaborators – leading us to conceive of 'Visconti' no longer as one individual but rather as a network of personnel.

To pictorial references for costume and set design, we must add the literary intermediary. References to paintings and painters were often made in the literary sources that Visconti adapted, such as *Il Gattopardo* by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, Thomas Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig* or Gabriele D'Annunzio's *L'innocente*. During the nineties, the field of Word and Image Studies adopted the term *ekphrasis*: a rhetorical device in which a medium or art relates to another medium or art by describing or defining its essence and form. Initially *ekphrasis* was limited to literal descriptions of, say, a painting, but it was also gradually applied to photographs or films in which artworks from other media were analysed. Consider the analysis by Säger Eidt (2008) of Vermeer's work in the novel *The Girl with a Pearl Earring* by Tracy Chevalier that Peter Webber adapted for the screen.¹⁶ As will become clearer in our first section, *ekphrasis* is a useful term for the approaching the recurring use of painting in Visconti's films by the intermedial layer of text (literary or otherwise).

Framing and staging

Visconti's appropriation of staging and framing is harder to situate within his own biography and social network, and often written or oral sources do not exist. Thus, a perspective was necessary that was less reliant on biography and 'hard facts' but that had a clear theoretical vision and could analyse the aesthetics and techniques of Visconti's imagery, such as family resemblances with earlier paintings or films. Along with the aforementioned film scholars, such as Bellocchio, Aumont, and others, this theoretical framework also combines semiotics with classical art history. In *The Self-Aware Image* (2015), the Romanian art historian Victor I. Stoichita analysed *framing* and connected it to staging in depth, analysing echoes of the frame within the image through the representation of mirrors, paintings, maps, doors, and windows in early modern painting.¹⁷ He connected this to a growing self-consciousness among painters, a metapictorial perspective and the modern

16 Laura M. Säger Eidt, *Writing and Filming the Painting: Ekphrasis in Literature and Film* (Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2008). See also W.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

17 Victor I. Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Metapainting* (London/Turnhout: Harvey Miller/Brepols, 2015), originally *L'instauration du tableau. Metapeinture à l'aube des temps modernes* (Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1993) and first edited in English as *The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Meta-Painting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). While I used the 1997 version for my research, the citations in my book stem from the 2015 version.

conception of painting (as a collectible and aesthetically pleasing object that was separated from a ritual function). For approaching the role of staging and in particular *framing* in Visconti's films, *The Self-Aware Image* is most useful. Stoichita's metapictorial perspective can be compared with Visconti's (self) conscious staging in depth. Nineteenth-century painting and silent and European and American cinema of the 1930s and 1940s also indicate the strong inter-visual relationships between art and cinema or between cinema and cinema in Visconti's films.

To analyse the foreground in painting, Stoichita uses the term *parergon*: the seemingly unimportant, ornamental, that which seems to be *hors-texte*, outside of the textual meaning of, say, a Biblical scene. Yet, in early modern painting, *parergon* tells another story, like a profane antithesis to the sacral one, implying a background commentary. With Visconti, objects in the foreground can also function as *parergon*: as *hors-texte* at first glance but upon a second viewing as an antithesis or confirmation of the film's narrative and its characters. When analysing this dialogue between fore- and background in Visconti's films by the use of *repoussoir* (to place a deep space-creating object in the foreground) or *depth cues* in general, the *parergon* can have an important narrative or symbolic function, even if it is not as strong as the magnified props in Hitchcock's films, such as the coffee cup in *Notorious* (1946).¹⁸ Stoichita is also important for understanding of framing in Visconti's films, as he discusses the echoes or doubles of the painterly frame in the representation of doors, windows, maps and mirrors. As doors may connect two interior spaces and remain within the domestic space, Stoichita considers the door opening as the matrix of interior or genre painting. Jacques Aumont in his *L'oeil interminable* (1991), however, relates the use of doors, windows and mirrors in films less to deep staging than to an affirmation of the characters' centralisation in classical cinema, creating a *mise en abîme*. In other films, the emptiness in the centre can accentuate the frame: *décadrage*, a term introduced by Pascal Bonitzer (see Chapter 8).¹⁹

Visconti's filtering or blocking of people through the use of *repoussoirs* (Chapter 7) confirms his indirect method of showing reality, a method that simultaneously immerses in and creates distance from the film. Filtering and blocking also show borders that signal the comparison between film and painting, such as the discussion of door and window openings in Chapter 8. Visconti's oeuvre can be compared to Dutch seventeenth-century painting, especially the perspectival look through adjacent spaces. Lighting also plays an important role as well as the accentuation of diegetic spaciousness by the actors' movements and mobile framing. Through the window, the *topos* of the gaze, we arrive at the person who is looking outside, whether through it or simply by the sea; in the latter, the film frame or picture frame functions as a window. The chapter ends with the escape from framing, namely the *topos* of the duo on the road escaping the captivity of their location. Chapter 9, on mobile framing, compares Jean Renoir's combination of deep staging and tracking shots with Visconti's work, and investigates both tracking in width (panoramic) and in depth. Visconti's

18 Props or properties are objects on the film set which perform narrative functions during the development of the film's narrative.

19 Aumont (2007), pp. 144-5.

experience with mobile framing in *Tosca* will also be discussed, particularly his visual exploration of clothing and objects. The last chapter of this section treats a specific aspect of deep staging – Visconti’s frequent use of mirrors that echoes the film frame itself. The reflections, which sometimes are visions, confront people with themselves or with others, often uncomfortably. Occasionally, mirrors seem to express moral judgements and even possess magical powers.

Intermediality

Along with Stoichita and the aforementioned film scholars, an additional framework was necessary. Studies in visual culture that, since the 1990s, have focused on the inter-visual and popular culture could have been an obvious choice.²⁰ These, however, tend to hark back to the older cultural studies paradigms established by Stuart Hall, among others, who forgo a sociological approach when analysing visual objects. The 1990s also witnessed a shift towards consumer studies, in which the object and even the medium itself became interchangeable within the broader research agendas of film history.²¹ For studies on spectatorship or distribution, such a strictly contextual perspective works quite well, but not when Visconti is the point of departure.²² Moreover, the semiotic faction within visual cultural studies tends to ignore historicity, due to their literary studies perspective, and neglects the inherent quality of the image (which Stoichita does not) in favour of using images to project a theory of words. Here, however, the medium specific qualities of cinema and painting *do* matter. In order to compare the two and to understand their interrelationship, we also need to be aware of medial differences diachronically and with respect to national and local differences. This study therefore relies on an intermedial approach that combines visual analysis with a context-driven, cultural historical perspective.

20 Ever since the field has expanded with its own education and publications: *Journal of Visual Culture*; Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer. On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992); Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Nicholas Mirzoeff ed., *The Visual Culture Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998); Marita Sturken/Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking. An Introduction to Visual Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Mieke Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio. Contemporary Art, Preposterous History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); W.J.T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

21 This came forward at the conference 'Cinema in Context' (2006), organized by the University of Amsterdam. On this occasion, I was co-editor of the special issue 'Cinema in Context' of *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis*, in which the keynote speeches were published. In particular Richard Maltby deepened the shift towards *consumer studies*. See Maltby, 'On the prospect of writing cinema history from below', *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* 2 (2006), pp. 74-96.

22 Ivo Blom, *Jean Desmet and the Early Dutch Film Trade* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003).

By now the field of intermediality has its own history that has been analysed by Henk Oosterling (1998), Jürgen Müller (2000), Irina Rajewsky (2005) and Agnes Pethő (2010).²³ In her article ‘Intermediality in Film: A Historiography of Methodologies’ (2010), Pethő suggests that while the term may be accepted in media studies, and has been institutionalized in literary and digital media studies, it is still viewed with suspicion in film studies.²⁴ Pethő suspects that language barriers and cultural contexts play a role because post-war film theory is prominent in the Anglophone world (especially the United States) while research into intermediality is conducted mainly in Germany, the Netherlands, the Scandinavian countries, Romania, Canada and France. Because of their ideas about ‘the virtual life of film’ and ‘piecemeal theorising’, Pethő argues that film scholars such as David Rodowick and David Bordwell lean toward intermediality, even if they do not name it as such.²⁵ Rodowick seems to ask the same research question as do the media theorists. Bordwell’s piecemeal theory, standing between Grand Theory and empirical research, looks similar to a diversified intermedial approach as described by Rajewsky: 1) intermediality as a fundamental condition or category (debates on terminology and classification); 2) tracing media history from the perspective of the birth and interrelation of individual media (Kittler, Bolter and Grusin) or from the pragmatic concept of convergence (Jenkins); 3) or studies of intermediality as a critical category, ‘resulting in detailed analyses of intermedial relations within specific texts or media (configurations)’.²⁶ This book focuses on the latter, critical, category of intermediality, even if it also works on the second, historical, level as well.

Like literary or art historians, film scholars no longer focus solely on cinema. We focus on relationships with other forms of art and media, and with the migration of images from one medium to another, from one art to another.²⁷ The more conventional question of distinctions between so-called high and low art is less urgent in an intermedial approach. What is more interesting is how certain images can transform into icons through reproduction, parody, citation, and plagiarism.

23 Henk Oosterling, ‘Intermediality: Art Between Images, Words, and Actions’, in: *Think Art: Theory and Practice in the Art of Today*. Symposium under the Direction of Jean-Marie Schaeffer (Rotterdam: Witte de With, 1998), pp. 89-100; Jürgen Müller, ‘L’intermédialité, une nouvelle approche interdisciplinaire: perspectives théoriques et pratiques à l’exemple de vision de la télévision’, in: Silvestra Mariniello ed., *Cinémas* 10, 2-3, ‘Cinéma et intermédialité’ (Spring 2000), pp. 105-34; Irina O. Rajewsky, ‘Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation: A Literary Perspective on Intermediality’, *Intermédialités* 6 (2005), pp. 43-64. Agnes Pethő, ‘Intermediality in Film: A Historiography of Methodologies’, *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae. Film and Media Studies* 2 (2010), pp. 39-72. <http://www.acta.sapientia.ro/acta-film/C2/film2-3.pdf>.

24 Pethő 2010. This is the publication of her keynote address at the 2009 Amsterdam workshop.

25 Pethő 2010, p. 45. Pethő refers a.o. to David Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), and David Bordwell, ‘Contemporary Film Studies and the Vicissitudes of Grand Theory’, in: David Bordwell/Noël Carroll eds., *Post-Theory. Reconstructing Film Studies* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 1996), pp. 3-36.

26 Pethő 2010, p. 40. Rajewsky here refers to Friedrich A. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999; orig. Berlin 1986); Jay Bolter, Richard Grusin, *Remediation. Understanding New Media* (Cambridge.: MIT Press, 2000); Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

27 In the 1990s and early 2000s Jacques Aumont focused on a project around formal migration of painting to cinema. See: Aumont, ‘Migrations’, *Cinémathèque* 7 (1995), pp. 35-47; ‘Vanités (Migrations, 2)’, *Cinémathèque* 16 (1999), pp. 7-21; ‘Annonciations’ (Migrations 3), *Cinémas* 12, 3, Spring 2002, pp. 53-71.

Unlike Walter Benjamin's famous statement that images lose their aura through reproduction, reproduction, pastiche, parody and other forms of intermedial appropriation iconize and strengthen the image, granting it a new status.²⁸ Clearly it's too simple to say that *intertextuality* only takes place within one medium and that *intermediality* is the same as *crossmediality*. Intermediality is often linked to some form of reflection on the individual medium. If the appropriation of images and image migration takes place through, for example, visual quotations, says Müller, we are speaking of intertextuality because the structure of the image does not change. When we talk about translating the aesthetic conventions from one medium into another that affects the medium's structure, we are here speaking of intermediality.²⁹ Müller's distinction is not shared by everyone – other scholars retain the distinction between intertextuality – or even intratextuality (see Wolf below) – as medium specific and intermediality as crossing the media boundaries.

As we now have different conceptualisations of intermediality within different academic fields (aesthetic, political, semiotic, sociological), we should speak of multiple *intermedialities*.³⁰ Pethő believes that because of this heterogeneity, intermediality cannot be confined to a single academic discipline. A more appropriate term would be 'research axis'.³¹ The cinematic medium itself might even be considered as intermedial because of its combination of text (sound) and image, and its amalgam of aesthetic conventions taken from other media that inspired Ricciotto Canudo to write his *Manifesto of the Seventh Art* in 1911.³² In addition, a number of film scholars including Giuliana Bruno and Robert Stam conceived of *intertextuality* as crossmedial in the late 1980s-1990s, not only as object-oriented but also as historical-contextual – which certainly did not lessen the terminological discussion.³³ Stam, possibly because of his semiotic stance, treats parallel phenomena in literature and film, looking at differences rather than similarities, rather than examining specific relationships. Semiotics and intertextuality played an important early role in the conceptualising of intermediality, but due to multiple subsequent approaches and post-media phenomena, they now seem only to play a historical role. Using the English term 'text' for the object or the medium has become untenable because the perception

28 Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media* (Cambridge/London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008).

29 Müller 2000.

30 Ginette Verstraete, 'Introduction. Intermedialities: A Brief Survey of Conceptual Key Issues', *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae. Film and Media Studies* 2 (2010), pp.7-14. <http://www.acta.sapientia.ro/acta-film/C2/film2-1.pdf>.

31 Pethő 2010, pp. 40-1.

32 Referring to Jürgen Müller and Yvonne Spielmann, Pethő makes clear that not everybody thinks in the same way. Film is not hybrid or intermedial *per se*, Müller says, because it absorbed its predecessors (*pace* McLuhan), but because we can see the medial interaction and interference on all possible levels right from the start. For Spielmann, cinema is not automatically an intermedium or intermedia. For this several interrelations between media need to converge into a new mixed form. In short, cinema can be considered intermedial because of the interaction with other media on different levels, but it can also be a medium that develops configurations which we regard as intermedial. Pethő (2010), pp. 48-9.

33 Giuliana Bruno, *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map. Cultural Theory and the City Films of Elvira Notari* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1993), p. 151. Bruno here bases herself on literary studies scholar Gérard Genette. Robert Stam, *Subversive Pleasures. Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism, and Film* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press 1989), p. 14.

of (visual) media is so different. Moreover, the 'inter' in intermediality connotes a keen awareness of medial differences.³⁴

Performing intermedial research in film studies has become easier than it was a few decades ago. Film studies took shape as an academic discipline in the fifties and sixties. To define themselves within the broader academic world, film scholars highlighted the cinema's medium-specific qualities. Building on the pre-war, purist vision of theorists like Rudolf Arnheim, editing became considered film's distinctive, medium-specific quality.³⁵ At the same time, film scholars no longer exclusively focus on the medium, and now investigate cross-media and cross-artistic relationships. Recently they have been incorporating intermediality into the study of early cinema. This has also led to new insights into art history as the history of visual culture has been taken into account increasingly and the boundaries between *high* and *low* art have become more diffuse.³⁶ The emancipation of film studies has led to less emphasis on editing (what occurs *between* successive images)³⁷ while *mise en scène* (what happens *within* the image such as performance, lighting, set and costume design) has gained more attention.³⁸ This includes elements such as unrealistic performances, the choice of colours in sets and costumes, deep staging, echoes of the film frame in the setting or playing with a *montage à l'intérieur* through the use of mirrors.³⁹ This framework makes it easier to draw comparisons between cinema and painting in the direct and indirect sense. New research also comprises visual citations in the form of parody or pastiche, the historical or artistic inspirations for set and costume design, props (paintings and photos) inside settings, poses and gestures taken from painting or the stage, and theatrical lighting similar to Baroque theatrical art.

34 Ágnes Pethő to the author, 29 May 2011.

35 Rudolf Arnheim, 'A New Laocoön. Artistic Composites and the Talking Film', *Film as Art*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1938), pp. 199-215. In 1999 Arnheim stepped down from his purist vision and propagated a more *Gesamtkunstwerk*-like, synthetic vision. Rudolf Arnheim, 'Composites of Media: the History of an Idea', *Michigan Quarterly Review*, 38, 4 (Autumn 1999), pp. 558-61.

36 A compelling example here is Angela Dalle Vacche's chapter on the film *Thérèse* (1986) by Alain Cavalier, in which she states that the film may require that we look with new eyes at the domestic genre painting with a still life component. Angela Dalle Vacche, 'Alain Cavalier's *Thérèse*: Still Life and the Close-Up as Feminine Space', in: Dalle Vacche 1996, pp. 221-45. See also her volume *The Visual Turn: Classical Film Theory and Art History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003).

37 Recently, a renewed interest in editing has developed among art historians who delve into film and photographic studies. Here the concept of *montage* is often connected with the concept of *collage*, such as Didi-Huberman's interest in Brecht's editing of photo materials around the Second World War or his interest in Warburg's 'Bilderatlas'. Georges Didi-Huberman, *L'oeil de l'histoire. Tome 1: Quand les images prennent position* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 2009). See also Manuela Pallotto, *Vedere il tempo. La storia warburghiana oltre il racconto* (Rome: Nuova Editrice Universitaria, 2007).

38 The shift in attention towards *mise en scène* is not entirely recent. In the forties and fifties, the French film critic André Bazin already pleaded for this. See David Bordwell, *On the History of Film Style* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

39 That is the interpretation by Bordwell and Thompson that I follow in this book. Others have interpreted this in more encompassing ways: for Bazin cinematography was also part of it, and for Godard even editing. David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, ch. 4. 'The Shot: *Mise-en-Scène*', *Film Art: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2013), pp. 112-59.

In her article ‘Intermediality, Intertextuality and Remediation: A Literary Perspective on Intermediality’⁴⁰, Irina O. Rajewsky refers to Sybille Krämer’s concept of media-recognition (*Medienerkenntnis*), to Jens Schröter’s idea of *ontological* intermediality, and to Gaudreault and Marion’s words that ‘it is through intermediality, through a concern with the intermedial, that a medium is understood’.⁴¹ Most versions of intermediality, such as Bolter and Grusin’s *remediation*, however, tend to generalize. Dissatisfied with a broad interpretation of *intermediality* that only conceives of phenomena taking place between media, Rajewsky proposes a narrower version that takes into account individual cases and historicity, an appealing method for incorporating both formal and historical approaches. She proposes the category of *intermedial references* ‘to be understood as meaning-constitutional strategies that contribute to the media product’s overall signification: the media product uses its own media-specific means, either to refer to a specific, individual work produced in another medium (i.e. what in German tradition is called *Einzelreferenz*, ‘individual reference’), or to refer to a specific medial subsystem (such as a certain film genre), or even another medium qua system (*Systemreferenz*, ‘system reference’).⁴² References to painting in films is one possibility, then, though it remains unclear whether this encompasses aesthetic conventions from other media, or even specific temporarily and geographically limited kinds of painting and pictorial quotations in films. It is hard to establish this, as Rajewsky’s approach remains mainly within literary studies, though she combines it with a diachronic, historical layer that is unusual for this discipline. My project calls for an inter-visual approach⁴³ that takes into account developments in both painting and cinema even if, like Engell⁴⁴ proposes, the concept of motif *per se* is not strictly medium-specific, but receives its medium-specific impact only through its use within the medium-bound framework of narrative, space or time.

Intermedial studies also help to define our research into Visconti’s framing, mobile framing and use of mirrors. Werner Wolf, in his article ‘Frames, Framings and Framing Borders’ (2006)⁴⁵, presents a general model for conceiving *the frame* in a mostly cognitive but also literal way in literature as well as painting and cinema. He connects the literal frame (including the painting’s and the film’s) with the function of *framing*, so guiding and enabling interpretation, thus turning frames into meta-phenomena. ‘Since interpretation always involves concepts, one can argue that frames as “keys” to interpretation are at least ‘metaconcepts’: concepts

40 Irina O. Rajewsky, ‘Intermediality, Intertextuality and Remediation: A Literary Perspective on Intermediality’, *Intermedialités* 6 (2005), pp. 43-64.

41 Rajewsky 2005, p. 48. See also Jens Schröter, ‘Intermedialität. Facetten und Probleme eines aktuellen medienwissenschaftlichen Begriffs’. *Montage A/V* 7, 2 (1998), pp. 129-54.

42 Rajewsky 2005, p. 53.

43 For the sake of my argument, I am leaving aside here film sound, even when acknowledging that it makes up at least half of a film’s final result.

44 André Wendler and Lorenz Engell, ‘Medienwissenschaft der Motive’, *zfm. Zeitschrift für Medienwissenschaft* 1 (2009), pp. 38-49.

45 Werner Wolf, ‘Introduction: Frames, Framings and Framing Borders’, in Werner Wolf, Walter Bernhardt, *Framing Borders* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), pp. 1-40. Despite its shortcomings in the fields of art and cinema, and its limitation in treating literal framing, Wolf’s article is really helpful in connection cognitive with literal framing, and in defining intratextual framing.

that regulate the application of other concepts'.⁴⁶ Wolf stresses that frames are *transmedial* phenomena (existing in more than one medium), and therefore calls for an interdisciplinary approach in which a *transmedial* perspective would be very welcome.⁴⁷ As opposed to the *paratextual* framings that Wolf situates exclusively outside of the text, '*intratextual* framings (which are usually authorized) comprise all elements within the 'main' text that signal particular cognitive frames which are relevant to the reception of the work (or parts of it) under consideration'.⁴⁸ The *mise en abîme* of a painted frame within a picture falls into this category; likewise doors, windows and mirrors used in painting and in film may also be denominated as *intratextual*. Wolf stresses that all of these frames set *borders*. Rajewsky helpfully discusses the various conceptual interpretations and uses of *intermediality*. She calls one option *transmedial intermediality*⁴⁹, 'the appearance of a certain motif, aesthetic, or discourse across a variety of different media'.⁵⁰ This applies well when we compare, for example, Visconti's use of the motifs of the door, the window, and the mirror with their appearances in early modern painting.

Historiography of art and cinema in Italy

From its earliest years Italy has had a synthetic vision of the cinematic medium, from Ricciotto Canudo's *Gesamtkunstwerk*-like *Manifesto of the Seventh Art*, through studies by S.A. Luciani and Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti from the immediate post-Second World War years, to the more recent work of Antonio Costa and Leonardo De Franceschi.⁵¹ Yet, Luciani and Ragghianti represented a watershed: their generation was inspired by Rudolf Arnheim to explore the avant-garde and was raised with both formalist film and art documentary, which was reflected in Mario Verdone's studies on costume and art direction.⁵² In later decades, the tie with avant-garde slackened and literature on film and the arts grew scarce. A possible explanation can be found in international theory. For a time crossmedial research in international theory was limited to comparing film and literature; literary studies were, moreover, long seen as a basis for semiotic and structuralist approaches to

46 Wolf 2006, p. 3.

47 Ibid., p. 10.

48 Ibid., p. 20.

49 Transmedial is one of the four categories Jens Schröter proposes in his seminal text 'Intermedialität. Facetten und Probleme eines aktuellen medienwissenschaftlichen Begriffs' (1998). The other categories are synthetic, transformational and ontological intermediality. See also Jens Schröter, 'Discourses and Models of Intermediality.' *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 13, 3 (2011), <http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1790>.

50 Rajewsky 2005, p. 46.

51 S.A. Luciani, *Il cinema e le arti* (Siena: Ticci Editore Libraio, 1942), Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti, *Arti della visione* (Torino: Einaudi, 1975/1952), Antonio Costa, *Cinema e pittura* (Torino: Loescher, 1991) and *Il cinema e le arti visive* (Torino: Einaudi, 2002), Leonardo De Franceschi ed., *Cinemat Pittura. Dinamiche di scambio* (Torino: Lindau, 2003).

52 Arnheim fled Germany in 1933 and settled in Rome, but was forced to leave Italy when the racial laws of 1938 were introduced. Arnheim's *Film as Kunst* (1932) would only be published in Italian after the war, but in the 1930s he already published several Italian articles in the journals *Intercine* and *Cinema* during his stay in Rome. He also lectured at the new Roman film academy Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia. Arnheim's Italian articles were republished in Adriano D'Aloia, *I baffi di Charlot. Scritti italiani sul cinema 1932-1938* (Turin: Kaplan, 2009).

film. Later film theorists sought their own models of visual and cinematic grammar that were conceived from a visual, rather than textual, perspective. The inter-visual relationship of film with painting thus remained ‘contaminated’ for a long time.

For the study of painting within Visconti’s films, Raffaele Monti’s *Les Macchiaioli et le cinéma italien* (1972) offered an initial interesting comparison of this early modernist, pre-Impressionist and socio-politically engaged nineteenth century Italian painting with twentieth-century Italian historical film. Monti put images of such Macchiaioli-painters like Giovanni Fattori, Silvestro Lega and Telemaco Signorini next to production stills from Visconti’s *Senso* and *The Leopard* as well as Mauro Bolognini’s *La viaccia* (1961) and described their similarities. He placed the artistic inspiration for the Italian historical film in a tradition that began in the thirties with such films as *1860* (1933) by Alessandro Blasetti, due to the rigour and historical accuracy of set and costume designers like Gino Sensani. Monti’s study, for a long time only available in French, suffered from a paucity of archival research and was consequently restricted to analysing formal or thematic similarities, remaining rather speculative.⁵³ Literature on film and visual arts, while never absent in Italy, has become remarkably abundant since the nineties as compared with other European countries and the US. To name a few representative studies: Antonio Costa’s *Cinema e pittura* (1991), Roberto Campari’s *Il fantasma del bello* (1994), Sergio Micheli’s *Lo sguardo oltre la norma* (2000), and Costa’s *Il cinema e le arti visive* (2001), in addition to special issues of *Art Dossier* (1987) and *Cinema & Cinema* (1989), as well as the 2000 Domitor conference in Udine: *Cinema and other arts* (2001). France created an important theoretical basis for the Italians, especially in Aumont’s ground-breaking *L’œil interminable* (1989) and Raymond Bellour’s *L’Entre-Images: Photo, cinéma, vidéo* (1990) as well as articles by Aumont, Bellour and others in the journal *Cinémathèque*. They also provided the framework for recent Italian master theses on Visconti and painting. All these studies created valuable and fascinating theoretical insights such as Aumont’s thesis of the changing look of the nineteenth century that created the visual look for the film medium, or Bellour’s analysis of video art as a transitional sphere between photography and film and the digital age.⁵⁴ What was still lacking, however, was not only the (inter-)media perspective that Pethő, Müller, and others have come to represent but also solid archival research – the consultation of all kinds of primary source materials, even oral testimony, particularly at the production level. One of the few Italians who has used primary sources intensively is Lino Micciché, the prolific and undisputed expert on Visconti.⁵⁵

53 His text appeared in Italian only in 2007 in Francesco Galluzzi ed., *Il cinema dei pittori. Le arti e il cinema italiano 1940-1980* (Milano: Skira, 2007), pp. 31-53. The similarities between Bolognini’s films and the Macchiaioli were recognized by the filmmaker. Monti 2007, p. 50.

54 Aumont 2007. Raymond Bellour, *L’Entre-Images. photo. cinéma. vidéo*. (Paris: Éditions de la Différence, 2002, orig. 1990). See also Aumont’s volume *Le septième art. Le cinéma parmi les arts* (Paris: Editions Léo Scheer, 2003) and his article, ‘The Variable Eye, or the Mobilization of the Gaze’, in Dudley Andrew ed., *The Image in Dispute. Art and Cinema in the Age of Photography* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), pp. 231-58. The last mentioned is a chapter from *L’œil interminable* which originally had the subtitle *Cinéma et peinture*.

55 See Micciché’s study of the *continuity books* of *La terra trema* by Francesco Rosi, now kept at the Cinémathèque française in Paris. Lino Micciché, ‘Verso La terra trema’, in *La terra trema. Analisi di un capolavoro* (Torino: Lindau, 1996), pp. 33-59.

Revisioning Italian film history

Over time, comparing Visconti's films with those of other filmmakers has become easier because attitudes have changed within Italian film criticism and film history. With the emergence of the New Film History, which has been influenced by the New Historicism within literary studies, film history no longer focuses on a small group of canonical author-directors but has made other filmmakers the subject of research. Italian film historical research, however, has been complicated by the nation's fraught, Fascist past. All films made during Mussolini's regime have been considered suspicious, with only a few like Visconti's *Ossessione* considered as anti-Fascist exceptions. Filmmakers like Alessandro Blasetti, Mario Camerini and others were dismissed by such prominent critics as Giuseppe Ferrara as mere 'calligraphists', whose films had an innovative formal beauty but little substantive content due to the Fascist's regime insistent pressure for ideological conformity. As provincials they were unable to compete with their peers despite the visual interest of some of their films.⁵⁶ Otherwise, the Fascist era was seen to have produced only propaganda films; their only interest being their realist qualities that pointed toward post-war Neorealism. Certainly, in the politicized Italian post-war climate, leftist film critics decided whom to privilege. Sympathy for Fascist era filmmakers was considered suspect. A committed communist such as Visconti could not admit that he borrowed stylistic elements from such 'contaminated' compatriots as Blasetti, Alessandrini, *Soldati* or *Franciolini*, and instead referred to safer French and Russian artists. France certainly played an important role, but there are also visual similarities between, say, *Ossessione* and Italian films from the thirties and early forties.

This should not detract from Visconti's early political and moral convictions, and neither from *Ossessione's* artistic innovations nor its great domestic impact. Certain elements might have been 'in the air' and may have 'slipped in' through Visconti's collaboration with cinematographers who also worked with Fascist-era directors. In this sense, 'Visconti' is not only an individual but also a network. Despite his control and power, he was always surrounded by such pre-eminent set and costume designers as Mario Garbuglia and Piero Tosi who, notwithstanding their innovation and creativity, built on older traditions in their craft. That Visconti's cinematographers such as Aldo Graziati and Giuseppe Rotunno had had their initial training in studio photography helps to explain the incredible feeling for *chiaroscuro* in his film images of the forties and fifties. Deeper research into Visconti's earliest film experiences, in particular into his hitherto neglected collaboration on the film *Tosca* (1941, Jean Renoir and Carl Koch), may help to explain the fluent cinematography, staging and framing of his films starting with *Ossessione*.

56 Giuseppe Ferrara, *Luchino Visconti* (Paris: Editions Seghers, 1963), pp. 9-10.

Hay (1987), Reich & Garofalo (2002) and Ricci (2008) have indicated that the tide has changed since the epochal 1974 Pesaro conference – a kind of Brighton conference for Italian cinema under Fascism.⁵⁷ At the tenth Pesaro film festival, a large selection of interwar Italian films was screened, many of which had not been shown for decades. Film historians and critics acknowledged the historical amnesia concerning the Fascist era and subsequently, Renzo De Felice's revisionist studies of Fascist Italy paralleled retrospectives and publications on the cinema of the *ventennio*, culminating in the RAI's 1987 broadcast of about forty 'Fascist' films.⁵⁸ What was a matter for much debate in the seventies can now be viewed on television, DVD or at festivals due to the reawakened interest in the Fascist era star system and the concomitant nostalgia for such stars as Alida Valli, Elsa Merlini, Rossano Brazzi, and Vittorio De Sica.⁵⁹ In the introduction to a volume on Fascist and wartime Italian cinema (2010) in the *Storia del cinema italiano* series, series editor Ernesto Laura summarized the current historicist view of that dark era: scholars should consider it from a historical perspective with an appropriate objective distance, neither flattering nor minimising, but should analyse in detail all aspects of these films and their socio-economic and cultural contexts.⁶⁰

Visconti's pictorial roots and cinematic palimpsests

Despite the rediscovery of pre-war and wartime cinema and the subsequent re-evaluations of Italian post-war genre cinema, post-war Neorealist cinema and such canonized post-war *auteurs* as Visconti remained paramount in national and international film historical literature. Throughout the nineties Visconti received plenty of attention from researchers, especially in the impressively large number

57 James Hay, *Popular Film Culture in Fascist Italy. The Passing of the Rex* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); Jacqueline Reich/Piero Garofalo eds, *Re-Viewing Fascism. Italian Cinema, 1922-1943* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002); Steven Ricci, *Cinema & Fascism. Italian Film and Society, 1922-1943* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008). At the 1978 FIAF symposium 'Cinema 1900-1906' in Brighton, early cinema was rediscovered by film scholars and film archivists and marked a watershed in the recognition of both early cinema and primary source material in film studies. See also *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser, with Adam Barker (London: British Film Institute, 1990), containing several essays influenced by the Brighton event and written by participating film historians, such as Charles Musser, Tom Gunning, André Gaudreault, Noël Burch, and Barry Salt.

58 This amnesia wasn't limited to Italy, cf. Henri Rousso's *The Vichy Syndrome* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).

59 Ricci 2008, pp. 19-51.

60 Ernesto G. Laura, 'Introduzione', in: idem/ Alfredo Baldi eds., *Storia del cinema italiano, 1940/944* (Venezia/Roma: Marsilio.Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, 2010), pp. 3-31. The Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia was founded in 1935 as the first West European film academy. Early in 1940 it moved to its present location designed by the architect Antonio Valente. Within the same complex the Cineteca Nazionale was founded in 1949, which originated from the academy's study collection.

of Italian and French publications.⁶¹ Although modern Italian cinema slowly re-emerged from the impasse of the eighties, there persisted a lack of new auteurs and scholarly interest in emerging talent. Researchers wrote articles, monographs, biographies, catalogue texts and volumes mostly on the famous directors of the previous decades. Likewise the Centro Sperimentale restored films by established names instead of genre cinema and Fascist-era sound cinema, let alone silent cinema.⁶² One of those names was Visconti, whose oeuvre was largely saved from decay. Studies focused on his relationship to Italian history, his connections with literature and music, his (eclectic) stylistic similarities with Neorealism and decadence, and his interaction between film, theatre, opera which, as Visconti

61 Apart from countless articles (see *biblioVisconti* 1, 2 and 3), examples of volumes and monographs include: Michèle Lagny, *Visconti: Classicisme et Subversion* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1990); idem, *Senso* (Paris: Nathan, 1992); Renzo Renzi, *Visconti segreto* (Roma/Bari, Laterza, 1994); Suzanne Liandrat-Guigues, *Les images du temps dans Vaghe stelle dell'Orsa de Luchino Visconti* (Paris: L'Oeil vivant/ Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1995); Lino Micciché ed., *Il Gattopardo* (Roma/Napoli: Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia/Electa, 1996); idem ed., *La terra trema. Analisi di un capolavoro* (Roma/Torino: Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia/Associazione Philip Morris/Lindau, 1996); idem, *Luchino Visconti. Un profilo critico* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1996); David Bruni, Veronica Pravadelli eds., *Studi viscontiani* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1997); Henry Bacon, *Visconti: Explorations of Beauty and Decay* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Suzanne Liandrat-Guigues, *Le couchant et l'aurore. Sur le cinéma de Luchino Visconti* (Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck 1999); Veronica Pravadelli ed., *Il cinema di Luchino Visconti* (Roma/Venezia: Fondazione Scuola Nazionale del Cinema/Marsilio, 2000); idem ed., *Visconti a Volterra. La genesi di Vaghe stelle dell'Orsa...* (Torino: Lindau, 2000). In addition, several exhibition catalogues have been made, such as *Visconti e il suo lavoro* (Milano: Electa, 1995), after an exhibition held in Ferrara. The panorama of the decade was dominated by the volumes and monographs by Micciché and his circle. After 2000, the scholarly output became more varied and the stream of publications has not relented. Already before the nineties groundbreaking publications were released, such as those by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (1967/1973) and Pio Baldelli (1965/1982), plus critical biographies by Rondolino and Schifano. See also *biblioVisconti* 1. The lasting popularity of Visconti and the renewed interest stemming from his centenary in 2006 led to the exhibition catalogues, Caterina D'Amico ed., *Luchino Visconti e il suo tempo* (Milano: Mondadori Electa, 2006) and Alberto Barbera and Raffaella Isoardi eds., *L'estetica dello sguardo. L'arte di Luchino Visconti* (Torino: Museo Nazionale del Cinema, 2006), as well as re-editions of the monograph by Nowell-Smith (2003) and the biographies by Rondolino (2006) and Schifano (2009). Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, *Luchino Visconti* (London: Secker & Warburg/BFI, 1967/1973; Doubleday 1968; Viking Press, 1973; BFI, 2006). Pio Baldelli, *I film di Luchino Visconti* (Manduria: Lacaíta, 1965; re-edition *Luchino Visconti*, Milano: Mazzotta, 1973). Gianni Rondolino, *Luchino Visconti* (UTET: Torino, 2006; orig. 1981). Laurence Schifano, *Les feux de la passion* (Paris: Perrin, 1987), reprinted in English in 1990 and a re-edited edition *Luchino Visconti. Une vie exposée* (Paris: Gallimard, 2009). For the biographies, see also Gaia Servadio, *Luchino Visconti, a biography* (New York: Franklin & Watts, 1983, orig. George Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1981), and Monica Stirling, *A Screen of Time: A Study of Luchino Visconti* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), reprinted in Dutch in 1982 and in French in 2001. For recent monographs and volumes on Visconti, see also Wolfgang Storch ed., *Götterdämmerung: Luchino Viscontis deutsche Trilogie* (Berlin: Jovis, 2003; book accompanying an exhibition in Berlin); Raffaele De Berti ed., *Il cinema di Luchino Visconti tra società e altre arti. Analisi di film* (Milano: CUEM, 2005); Federica Mazzocchi ed., *Luchino Visconti, la macchina e le muse* (Edizioni di Pagina, 2008); Alexander García Düttmann, *Visconti: Insights into Flesh and Blood* (Stanford University Press, 2008); David Huckvale, *Visconti and the German Dream: Romanticism, Wagner and the Nazi Catastrophe in Film* (Jefferson, NC/London: McFarland, 2012), plus the two books by Mauro Giori, *Poetica e prassi della trasgressione in Luchino Visconti 1935-1962* (Milano: Libraccio, 2011) and *Scandalo e banalità. Rappresentazioni dell'eros in Luchino Visconti (1963-1976)* (Milano: LED, 2012). In addition, various, mainly Italian, publications have been released on Visconti's theatrical career.

62 By contrast, the Cineteca di Bologna preserved lesser known titles, particularly in silent cinema. The film archive created its own lab, Immagine Ritrovata, just for this purpose. The Museo Nazionale del Cinema of Turin also has a strong focus on preserving of silent cinema.

himself admitted, was all the same, at least in his capacity as a director. Visconti's ties with such visual arts as painting and photography were less considered and quite speculatively at that.

Nevertheless, the connection between painting and cinematic style in Visconti's films has a long critical tradition. A beautiful and possibly the earliest reference to painting in his work was written by the critic Umberto Barbaro who, at the release of *Ossessione* in 1943 (shot in the city of Ferrara), penned an enthusiastic review in the journal, *Film*, referring to a Ferrarese Renaissance painter. Condemning the dominant wartime genres of easy comedies, literary adaptations, and heavy historical films, Barbaro craved greater realism, which also had its roots in Italian pictorial traditions. When he saw an ice cream cart in the form of a swan and another in the form of a dragon in *Ossessione*, he asked rhetorically, 'doesn't the appearance of such a strange and fanciful little ice [cream] cart in a square in Ferrara have any noble precedents that might hark all the way back to Ercole de' Roberti?'⁶³ In a later discussion in *Film*, Barbaro again drew artistic associations when he described a scene in which women comb their abundant hair as if they were Melisenda in Edmond Rostand's *La Princesse lointaine*. He also makes allusions to gardens where one relaxes to eat ice cream and that seem to emerge from the bellies of dragons that seem to have stepped out of paintings and frescoes in order to transform themselves into bicycle carts.⁶⁴ While Barbaro associates filmic images with classical art, Visconti himself also makes specific artistic references to explain a certain look or image to his collaborators, as we will observe below.

The relationship between film and painting in Visconti is a delicate subject because, except for *Senso*'s striking and direct pictorial quotations, it is not usually as explicit as it is with literature or theatre. Visconti denied or at least downplayed his films' connections with painting. Interviewed by *Cahiers du Cinéma* in 1959, he was asked if he had intended to recreate the aesthetics of the nineteenth-century Italian painter Giovanni Fattori in *Senso*. Visconti replied firmly, 'No. Of course I know Fattori who painted battle scenes from the same era as *Senso*, but I never want to copy him. I have simply tried to approach reality. And because Fattori has painted reality, others consider that our works correspond in some ways'.⁶⁵ Visconti's presumption that Fattori painted reality is telling due to the lack of proof, as is his identification of pictorial reference with citation or copying, a trait that also characterized his screenplays. He would not hesitate to cite directly from the novels he adapted while at the same time changing and condensing them, not

63 Umberto Barbaro, 'Neo-realismo', *Film*, VI, 5 June 1943; republished in Gian Piero Brunetta, *Neorealismo e realismo* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1976), p. 504. With the ice-cream cart in the shape of a swan, Barbaro possibly referred to the fresque *Il Salone dei Mesi* (1469-70) at Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara. In the depiction of the month of April, entitled *The Triumph of Venus*, painted by Francesco Del Cossa – and not by his fellow townsman De Roberti – the chariot of Venus is pulled by two swans. For the dragon Barbaro possibly thought of Cosmè Tura's *San Giorgio e la principessa* (1469), now at the Museo del Duomo in Ferrara, but in Barbaro's time was still hung in the cathedral of Ferrara.

64 Umberto Barbaro, 'Realismo e moralità', *Film*, VI, 31, 31 July 1943; republished as Brunetta (1976), p. 508. Barbaro explicitly refers in this article to the Palazzo Schifanoia and the Palazzo dei Diamanti in Ferrara.

65 Jacques Doniol-Valcroze & Jean Demarchi, 'Entretien avec Luchino Visconti', *Cahiers du cinéma*, XVI, 93 (March 1959), p. 4.

only due to the exigencies of film length but also for political or moral reasons. In an interview with Lino Micciché in 1971, he asserted, 'it often happens, though, that others see things in my films which I didn't know I had put in and which I did not work in consciously at least. This happens especially with painterly references. Yet I never start a movie telling myself: now I'm going to imitate Fattori's painting or something. In *Senso*, for example, everybody went to great lengths to find references, allusions, reproductions, and inspirations where I never imagined them. It even happens that when I read them, I think: it could very well be'.⁶⁶

In this, Visconti was being more than a little disingenuous as the citations in *Senso* of Hayez's *Bacio* and Telemaco Signorini's *La toilette del mattino* (1898) are too pronounced to be accidental. The production company, Lux, made sure its promotional materials highlighted the similarities. Visconti's art historical mentor and advisor on *Senso*, the art critic and historian, Emilio Cecchi, father of Visconti's regular screenwriter Suso Cecchi D'Amico, explicitly stated *Senso*'s connection to Fattori in his article, published in *Illustrazione italiana*, 'Senso e il colore nel film'.⁶⁷ Visconti did not talk about the more *indirect* ways in which the pictorial appears in his work, such as in deep staging and framing, in the literal use of paintings in his sets, or in pictorial references in film costumes.

Visconti's visual roots are not only to be found in the static visual arts but also in the development of cinematic language. Similar to paintings, he rarely spoke publicly about films that inspired him. Nevertheless his visual style, especially his cinematography, stands within multiple cinematic traditions including silent cinema and thirties and forties European cinema both inside and outside of Italy. Visconti's statements about his appropriation of other people's films have been researched 'textually' in terms of their historical context. Yet, this book centres on visual analysis and artistic associations because Visconti's assertions were not always reliable. Hence, this book is not just about Visconti. To a certain extent his films function as palimpsests – other films are hidden under the surface layer of his work. Pethő (2010) suggests the term *parallax historiography*, introduced by Catherine Russell, which 'refers to the way in which earlier forms of cinema get to be revisited and re-interpreted from the perspective of newer media forms of moving images, or reversely, how these newer media forms can be interpreted from the perspective of earlier forms of cinema'.⁶⁸ Visconti's re-use and re-interpretation of earlier cinema may then be conceived as a kind of parallax historiography, suggesting an *archaeology of the medium* as Thomas Elsaesser and Tom Gunning have also asserted.⁶⁹

66 Lino Micciché, 'Un incontro al magnetofono con Luchino Visconti', in Lino Micciché ed., *Morte a Venezia* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1971), p. 121.

67 Emilio Cecchi, 'Senso e il colore nel film', *Illustrazione italiana* (Christmas 1954), pp. 16-21, 73.

68 Pethő 2010, p. 55.

69 Ibid. See e.g. Thomas Elsaesser, 'The New Film History as Media Archaeology', *Cinémas* 14, 2-3, 2004, pp. 75-117. See also the essays by Gunning and Elsaesser in Wanda Strauven ed., *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006).

Chapters

A key aspect of Visconti's style is his careful attention to the visual elements within the frame, especially in presenting material artifacts that are invested with a deeper significance. In particular, Visconti often uses *pictorial citations* as a means of linking his characters – and his historical films in general – to specific political events and aesthetic movements in contemporary European history. The pictorial citation produces an interaction between painting and cinema by presenting filmic images that recreate (or cite) paintings known to an educated viewer (which would be the case for Visconti and his intended audience). This citation would produce a particular historical and cultural resonance to those sophisticated enough to understand the references, adding another dimension to what was being shown onscreen. By examining the citation of the painting *Il bacio* (1859) by Francesco Hayez in Visconti's film *Senso*, this chapter will show both how images migrate across media and how Visconti appropriated painting into his films. Following Baxandall and Derrida,⁷⁰ I will trace the specific 'route' through which Hayez's painting was turned into a citation within the filmic text. Here, I will focus on the development of Hayez and *Il bacio's* reputation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and at the ways the painting has been culturally recycled.

Visconti's use of paintings moves beyond mere on-screen re-stagings. Chapters 2 and 3 examine the literal presence of painting in his films, namely as paintings in the sets themselves. Two examples will be discussed: Greuze's *Le fils puni* (1778) in *The Leopard* (1963) and the so-called 'conversation pieces' by Zoffany and others in *Conversation Piece (Gruppo di famiglia in un interno)*, (1974). Greuze and his paintings' reputation will be analysed along with the narrative functions of *Le fils puni* and the conversation pieces in Visconti's films. Written sources such as Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's novel *The Leopard (Il Gattopardo)*, (1958), Mario Praz's study *Conversation Pieces* (1971) and the original scenarios of *The Leopard* at the Fondo Visconti work as inter-media, though Visconti's own acts of appropriation count the most.⁷¹ In line with this, Chapter 4 looks at how Visconti handles portraits, particularly from photography, in *The Damned* (1969) and *Death in Venice* (1971). Chapter 5 discusses the historical and aesthetic inspiration from painting and photography for Visconti's use of costumes with *Senso* as a case study. Academic painting, genre painting and artistic photography will be discussed (Winterhalter, Stevens, Pierson), along with the works of Vincent van Gogh. Canonical painting appears to play a greater role within the imagination of film critics than with Visconti, though one should not overestimate the influence of non-canonical works on him and his staff. Chapter 6 also deals with Visconti's film costumes, linking narration, character, and historical setting through the theme of the veil. Veiling and unveiling are both literally and figuratively central to several of Visconti's films and provide insight into his dealings with film costumes.

70 Mieke Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio. Contemporary Art, Preposterous History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 11: 'Whereas for Bakhtin the word never forgets where it has been before, for Derrida it never returns there without the burden of the excursion through the quotation'.

71 Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, *Il Gattopardo* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1982/1958). Mario Praz, *Conversation Pieces. A Survey of the Informal Group Portrait in Europe and America* (London: Methuen, 1971). Regarding Praz's book, the paintings' illustrations are of paramount importance.

The book's second half moves away from Visconti's specific strategies in set and costume design to consider his use of staging and framing. Even here, Visconti's debt to, and invocation of, nineteenth-century European painting is profound. Chapter 7 will consider the placement of objects and people within the frame often to obscure action or information from the viewer, a technique called *repoussoir*. Visconti clearly derived this style from French painters like Manet and Degas and filmmakers like Jean Renoir, Visconti's mentor in the 1930s. Chapter 8 extends this discussion to the very framing of objects and people within doors and windows, in effect, creating double and even triple sets of frames. Renoir plays a key role as well as Dutch painting and German Expressionism in film, especially the work of F.W. Murnau. The ninth chapter's discussion on mobile framing demonstrates perhaps Visconti's largest debt to Renoir, especially in the use of tracking shots. Even here, tracking along a horizontal plane had antecedents in nineteenth-century French and Italian panoramic painting, especially in Fattori, Carrà, and Manet. Finally, Velázquez's great painting, *Las Meninas*, provides the framework (no pun intended) for the discussion of Visconti's use of mirrors in the book's final chapter. Here, mirrors function both as a means for characters to confront themselves or to reveal aspects of their personalities.

The book, then, demonstrates the intense and sustained linkages that Visconti's films have with pictorial tradition of European high art. Consequently, any true decoding of his films must grapple with these sophisticated and multilayered visual strategies if we are to understand what connections Visconti sought to make between cinema and other visual media. We begin this study with the *pictorial citation* partly because it's one of the most self-evident instances of Visconti's invocations of European painting and because it provides a way of understanding why he considered such strategies important.

Part One

Pictorial Citation, Art Direction, and Costume Design in Visconti's Films

Pictorial Citation: *Il Bacio* and Other Citations in *Senso*

When considering the interrelation of cinema to painting, the pictorial quotation often comes to mind. Thanks to Romeo, Juliet and the balcony, Verona is considered the city of romance. William Shakespeare's romantic couple can be seen on souvenirs in different shapes and sizes – from lighters and postcards to puzzles and pens. Many of these images are based upon *Il bacio* (*The Kiss*, 1859), a painting by the Milanese artist Francesco Hayez (1791-1881), which has become an iconic image of Romeo and Juliet. It has also been quoted in films. Visconti quoted it first in *Senso* when the illicit couple, Livia Serpieri and Franz Mahler, embrace each other. Thus, we must travel back both in time and in media to see how a film quotation is the product of a long series of image migrations. How do these migrations change its meanings? And why did Visconti specifically appropriate *Il bacio*? Until now, this pictorial quotation has often been mentioned in the literature on Visconti, but few have researched the topic. The painting's reputation when it was quoted (1954 in the case of *Il bacio*) is just as important. As we will see, the art critic Emilio Cecchi played a key role in this matter. This chapter will devote attention to the *Nachleben* (afterlife) of a painting and its appropriation by Visconti as a visual quotation.⁷²

The Making of a Legend

In 1859 Francesco Hayez painted his most famous work, *Il bacio*, which was exhibited in the Milanese Accademia di Brera that same year, a few months after the forces of King Victor Emmanuel II and the French emperor Napoleon III entered the city. The canvas was a tribute to the Italo-French union and Lombardy's liberation from Austrian domination. The painting depicts a volunteer giving his beloved a last kiss before going to war. A shady figure in the background – a harbinger of death? – appears to pick up the volunteer. Decor and costumes are medieval – the subtitle was *Episodio della giovinezza. Costumi del secolo XIV* –

72 A shortened version of this chapter was previously published as 'De Kus bij Hayez en Visconti. Schilderkunst, film en intermedialiteit', *Jong Holland 2*, XXII, 2006, pp. 4-13. According to Suzanne Liandrat-Guigues, Visconti confirmed in interviews that he used a reproduction of the painting while shooting. She is absolutely correct to involve not only the second version by Hayez of *The Last Kiss by Romeo and Juliet* (see below in this chapter), but also the scene in Verdi's *Il Trovatore*, in which Manrico suddenly appears under the window of Leonora, hunted by the men of count Luna. Suzanne Liandrat-Guigues, 'Marcher dans l'image', in: Dominique Bax ed., *Théâtres au cinéma, No. 15. Luchino Visconti Gabriele D'Annunzio Giuseppe Verdi* (Bobigny: Magic Cinema, 2004), pp. 29-31.



Fig. 1. Senso (Luchino Visconti 1954).



Fig. 2. Francesco Hayez, Il bacio (1859). Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan.

and the atmosphere is reminiscent of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, a rewarding subject for painters at the time.⁷³ Due to its immediate popularity, Hayez painted several versions: two large plus some smaller ones. The original and most famous version is currently exhibited at the Pinacoteca di Brera in Milan,⁷⁴ and is a legacy donation of Count Alfonso Maria Visconti di Saliceto, who commissioned it.⁷⁵ Hayez exploited its popularity, however, far less than such colleagues as Lawrence Alma-Tadema or Jean-Léon Gérôme.⁷⁶ For example, there are no known large editions of etchings and engravings to drive up the sales, a tactic that the art dealer Goupil used for the work of Gérôme.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, magic lantern slides and postcards of *Il bacio* were being manufactured by 1900.

The applications of *Il bacio* are a fine example of 'the invention of tradition' or 'the making of a legend'.⁷⁸ Hayez's original political message has been fully obscured and the painting is now regarded as the ultimate representation of romantic but impossible love. The silhouette of a modern couple in the exact same pose has been the logo of Perugia's line of Baci chocolates since 1922.⁷⁹ The Baci couple, largely unchanged since then, was designed by Federico Seneca (1891-1976), a famous poster designer in the twenties.⁸⁰

Although less frequently than Gérôme's *Pollice verso*, Da Vinci's *Last Supper* or Michelangelo's *Pietà*, Hayez's painting has also been extensively quoted in the cinema, the most recent being in *Star Wars III: The Revenge of the Sith* (George Lucas, 2005) when Anakin (Hayden Christensen) and Padmé (Natalie Portman) kiss. Visconti also quoted *Il bacio* in his film, *Ludwig* (1972), when the young Bavarian King Ludwig II and the Austrian Empress Elisabeth embrace during an evening walk. First framed in close-up, Visconti's camera pulls back and we see the

73 For instance, Hayez finished in 1823 a painting entitled *L'Ultimo bacio di Romeo e Giulietta*.

74 Fernando Mazzocca, *Francesco Hayez, catalogo ragionato* (Milano: Federico Motta, 1994), pp. 307-10. Fernando Mazzocca ed., *Hayez. Dal mito al bacio* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1998), nr. 56 and 57, pp. 178-81. See also Paolo Biscottini, 'Dal mito al bacio: osservazioni in margine alla poetica romantica di Francesco Hayez' in: Mazzocca (1998), pp. 37-9.

75 Mazzocca (1994), pp. 307-9.

76 Robert Verhoogt, *Kunst in reproductie. De reproductie van kunst in de negentiende eeuw en in het bijzonder van Ary Scheffer (1795-1858), Jozef Israëls (1824-1911) en Lourens Alma-Tadema (1836-1912)* (Amsterdam: Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2004; thesis). Earlier, Verhoogt published on this in the Dutch art journal *Jong Holland*: 'En nu nog een paar woorden business'. *Reproducties naar het werk van Alma Tadema*, *Jong Holland* 4 (1996), pp. 22-37. *Gérôme et Goupil. Art and Enterprise* (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 2000).

77 Interview with Fernando Mazzocca, 12 July 2004.

78 Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger eds, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). There are dozens of book titles with the subtitle *The Making of a Legend*, whether it is about film stars, sports stars or famous scientists. An example is Ernest Samuels, *Bernard Berenson: The Making of a Legend* (Belknap Press, 1987).

79 http://www.nestle.it/ufficio_stampa/comunicati_stampa/comunicati_2003/Comunicato30102003.htm.

80 http://www.perugina.it/museo_pag04.htm. Seneca designed classical posters for Buitoni and Perugia.

couple in the pose of *Il bacio*. Ludwig also wears a cloak that recalls the painting.⁸¹ Yet the most famous quote in Visconti's work is in *Senso*.

In *Senso* Visconti reconstructed the pose with Franz Mahler (Farley Granger) and Livia Serpieri (Alida Valli) embracing in her countryside villa. Livia, an Italian countess, starts an adulterous relationship with Mahler, an officer in the Habsburg occupation army. She trades in her patriotism for a relationship with a representative of the enemy, even though it quickly becomes clear that he is an opportunist. Later he visits her in her villa, hoping to desert with the help of her money, as an important battle is imminent between the Austrians and the Italians – Custoza (1866) – which Visconti depicts in great detail. After initially opposing him, Livia gives in to and embraces him in the *Il bacio* pose. For Visconti, the pose served as an ideal contemporary image; since the painting was famous in the circles in which Livia moved, she would have known it.⁸² In this scene, Visconti expressed that in Risorgimento Italy, little distinction was made between life and theatre; romantic and nationalistic feelings made life seem more heroic, grander, and ideal than it was in reality. At the film's beginning, Livia accuses Franz of this: she loves opera but not away from the stage. In *Senso* however, life imitates art and becomes melodrama itself.

'Le premier peintre d'Italie'

Visconti made his protagonists adopt poses and gestures that resembled both theatre and theatrical painting. Unlike his theatrical and operatic productions – in which he was sometimes explicitly inspired by different paintings – less is known about the painterly poses in his films.⁸³ Whether a specific pose was based on the gestures or postures of well-known actors or those of characters in paintings was less important for him. With the citation of *Il bacio*, however, a particular effect was clearly sought. The two protagonists purposefully turn right while they kiss. They stand in front of a big cupboard that serves as a backdrop and delay their action, which facilitates the spectator's recognition of the quotation. In other words, the performance is adjusted to create the quotation.

In fact, the whole of figurative painting, from the Renaissance to nineteenth-century naturalism, can be seen as one great pose; this is especially so in Classicism and Romanticism. In these two styles, the focus was on people, history being the most popular subject. With the rise of landscape painting, though, in which people were subsumed by, or entirely absent from, the environment, the hierarchy

81 Visconti's cousin Luchino Gastel pointed this reference out to me when I interviewed him on 12 July 2004. He had been assistant director on Visconti's *Ludwig*. Stefania Severi suggests that in *The Leopard* Tancredi and Angelica's embrace in Palazzo Salina goes back to *Il bacio*, even if that seems a bit speculative. She indicates that Delon kissing Cardinale on the threshold creates a bond with *Il bacio*. I may add that while in *Il bacio* the man leaves, in *The Leopard* Tancredi returns. His kiss is one of reunion, just like in *Senso*, while with Hayez it is a goodbye kiss. Stefania Severi, 'L'arte figurativa e *Il Gattopardo* di Visconti: presenza, citazione, ispirazione', in Francesco Petrucci ed., *Visconti e Il Gattopardo. La scena del Principe* (Milan: De Agostini Rizzoli, 2001), pp. 85-6.

82 Interview with Piero Tosi, 21 September 1984.

83 Visconti used paintings by David and Ingres and sculptures by Canova for the gestures of the singers in his staging of Spontini's *La Vestale*, which was his first operatic production (1954), his first at the Teatro alla Scala and his first with Maria Callas. Schifano (2009), p. 405.

of subjects disappeared. The core issue was no longer *what* was painted but *how*: a sentiment that slowly devalued history painting, which was appreciated because of its human subjects. Historical paintings were often disguised political messages and strongly appealed to specific and targeted nationalist nineteenth-century audiences. The right gesture and the right pose were crucial for conveying both the appropriate sentiments and their subtle political undertones.

Hayez was the main representative of Romanticism in Italian painting. Influenced by the French classicist painter Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, Hayez combined Ingres's harmonious shapes and lines with the rich colours of the Venetian School. He was widely praised by contemporaries for his remarkable use of colour, though his coloration remains below the level of his French contemporary, Eugène Delacroix. Hayez was especially famous for his historical and literary subjects, such as his *Vespri Siciliani* (three versions, dating 1822, 1826-1827, and 1846) or his *La sete dei crociati sotto Gerusalemme* (1838-1850), and his scenes from the lives of the Milanese dukes, the Visconti. His historical and allegorical scenes were often references to the political situation in pre-unification Italy. On a number of Hayez's canvases, personifications of Italy stare pleadingly at the spectator.⁸⁴ The French writer and diplomat Stendhal praised Hayez as 'le premier peintre d'Italie à ce moment' [the finest painter in Italy at this moment]. He also expressed his admiration in *La Chartreuse de Parme* (1839): 'One particularly admired the ceiling, on which Hayez of Milan had represented Crescentius... [...]. The marquise... talked admiringly about the talent of Hayez who had made it. [...] Gonzo did not understand and he began to describe a fantastic picture gallery owned by the Marchesa Balbi, the mistress of the late prince, three or four times he talked about Hayez, with the slow emphasis of the deepest admiration'.⁸⁵

Hayez's paintings depicted the romantic nationalist feelings of his audience in a way that strongly recalls another art form – opera. The sense of pathos, grand gesture, and political allusions are characteristics of early nineteenth century Italian opera. The meticulous pursuit of historical accuracy, so characteristic of history painters like Paul Delaroche, became commonplace in the theatre, especially in sets and costumes.⁸⁶ From the middle of the eighteenth century, the beginnings of archaeology spurred a growing interest in history and, during the Romantic era, the cultivation of intense sentiments for past ages. Historical research was initiated and museums and public libraries arose across Europe. History became important in all branches of the arts, literature, architecture, painting, and music and, as a result, the period of the Middle Ages experienced a large revaluation. Shakespeare's plays became popular among painters and opera composers.⁸⁷ In Italy, history became

84 Examples include the two paintings entitled *Meditazione*, dated 1850 and 1851. Mazzocca 1998, pp. 168-9.

85 Giorgio Nicodemi, *Francesco Hayez* (Milano: Ceschina, 1962), pp. 104-5. Stendhal, *La chartreuse de Parme* (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1962), pp. 408, 494-5.

86 B. Hunningher, *De opkomst van modern theater. Van traditie tot experiment* (Amsterdam: International Theatre Bookshop, 1983), pp. 7-11.

87 Think of *Macbeth* (1847), *Othello* (1887) and *Falstaff* (1893) for Verdi operas after Shakespeare, *I Vespri Siciliani* (1855) for opera set in the Middle Ages, and *Ivanhoe* (1810) by Walter Scott for novels set in the Middle Ages.

important both as a means of constructing a nationalist narrative and as a way of discretely criticising the occupation forces of Habsburg Austria.

Il bacio was a big success in 1859. Hayez's contemporaries admired the way he united art and politics. The painting was set in the Middle Ages, though it also referred to the immediate Risorgimento moment: the young volunteer who goes to war to liberate his country from foreign domination. While the reputation of history painting had already declined considerably by then, *Il bacio* was nevertheless extolled by the critics. A slightly modified version was exhibited with great success at the Paris World's Fair in 1867 along with three other of Hayez's works.⁸⁸ A white scarf lies on the stairs of this version, which seems to have slipped off the woman's shoulders. The inside of the man's cloak is bright green, which together with the white of the scarf, red tights, and blue dress are clear references to the flags of France and Italy. Through the alliance of these two countries, the painting asserts that the new Italy was created, an even stronger political message than the earlier, original version.

According to Giorgio Nicodemi, *Il bacio* was the final highlight of Hayez's career: 'if *Il bacio* seemed [...] a courageous impulse for renewal, [his] subsequent works however signalled a cold virtuosity, far from every passion'.⁸⁹ *Il bacio* was made at a time when the boom in Hayez's popularity was starting to wane. The popularity of the painting was therefore independent of that of the painter. Only after the 1922 Venice Biennale, where he was represented with a small series of portraits, was there a careful reappraisal of Hayez's work. In 1934, the Castello Sforzesco in Milan organized the first major Hayez retrospective and exhibited a hundred of his works – only a fraction of his oeuvre. Interest then waned until 1983 when the city of Milan organized a retrospective at the Pinacoteca di Brera, followed fifteen years later by an exhibition in Padua at the Palazzo Zabarella.⁹⁰ Yet, Italian art criticism was not unaware of Hayez's importance. Despite his reservations, Emilio Cecchi noted in his standard work on the nineteenth-century Italian painting, *Pittura italiana dell'Ottocento* (1926): '[Hayez] is not the least among the four or five best artists of the nineteenth century'.⁹¹

Emilio Cecchi, Giovanni Fattori and Hayez's reputation

Emilio Cecchi (1884-1966) was one of the main Italian literary and art critics of the interwar period. He was profoundly influenced by art historian Roberto Longhi, with whom he ran the art journal *Paragone*, but even more by Bernard Berenson whose *Painters of the Renaissance* he translated for the magazine *Valori plastici* in 1928. Cecchi was not only a scholar of medieval and Renaissance painting, he was also an advocate of nineteenth and twentieth-century art. In 1926 he published his study, *Pittura italiana dell'Ottocento*, which became a standard work. He was one of the pioneers in the re-evaluation of the Macchiaioli painters, Italian artists who stood stylistically between the Barbizon School and the Impressionists

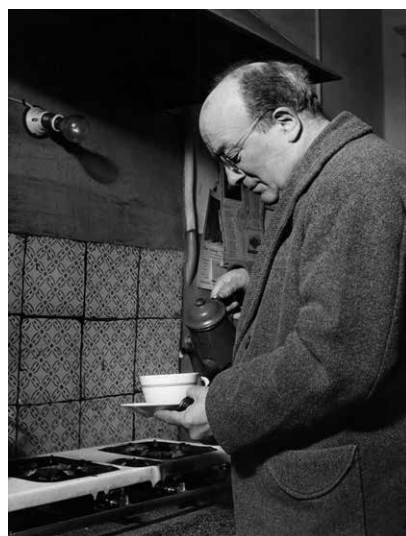
88 Mazzocca 1998, p. 310.

89 Nicodemi 1962, p. 78.

90 Mazzocca 1998, p. 14, 17.

91 Emilio Cecchi, *Pittura italiana dell'Ottocento* (Milano: Hoepli, 1938, orig. 1926), p. 20.

Fig. 3. Giacomo Pozzi Bellini,
Emilio Cecchi (1960s).



but who inserted Risorgimento-inspired political messages into some of their paintings. From 1920 he wrote articles about the painter Giovanni Fattori (1825-1908), which resulted in a monographic study (1933). Together with Silvestro Lega and Telemaco Signorini, Fattori was one of the most important painters of the Macchiaioli. Cecchi was also one of the first Italian intellectuals who seriously wrote about film as art.⁹² From 1932 he was director of the film company Cines and produced films like *Gli uomini, che mascalzoni* (1932) by Mario Camerini and *1860* (1934) by Alessandro Blasetti for which he also served as artistic and historical consultant. According to Raffaele Monti in *Les Macchiaioli et le cinéma* (1979), Cecchi would have pointed out to Blasetti Fattori's historical paintings in order to depict Garibaldi's struggles – the subject of *1860* – in a more generalized visual style than through direct quotation of specific works.⁹³

Visconti befriended Cecchi and admired him. He knew his work, had extensive talks with him, and consulted him during *Senso's* preparation because of his knowledge of nineteenth-century Italian painting. Later, Cecchi praised Visconti's *Senso* and *The Leopard*, particularly the former's use of colour and compared it to Fattori.⁹⁴ For the landscape scenes in *The Leopard*, Cecchi referred to Fattori and to the Macchiaioli painters, Lega and Abba.⁹⁵ In 1945 Visconti became friends with Cecchi's daughter, Suso Cecchi D'Amico, who from 1951 onward became his

92 Roberto Fedi ed., in collaboration with Caterina D'Amico de Carvalho, *Emilio Cecchi. Mostra bibliografica. Palazzo Strozzi-Firenze, 28 aprile-26 maggio 1979* (Firenze: Mori, 1979). Margherita Ghilardi ed., *Cecchi al cinema. Immagini e documenti (1930-1963)*, (Firenze: Mori, 1984).

93 Raffaele Monti, *Les Macchiaioli et le cinéma. L'image du XIXe siècle et la peinture des Macchiaioli dans le cinéma italien* (Paris/Roma: Editions Vilo/De Luca, 1979), pp. 10-12.

94 Emilio Cecchi, 'Senso e il colore nel film', *L'illustrazione italiana*, Milano (Christmas 1954), pp. 16-27, 73. This was part of a special issue on Italian cinema.

95 Emilio Cecchi, 'Dal romanzo al film', in: Suso Cecchi D'Amico ed., *Il film 'Il Gattopardo' e la regia di Luchino Visconti* (Bologna: Cappelli 1963), pp. 13-20.

regular scriptwriter.⁹⁶ While working on his scenarios Visconti often stayed at the D'Amico family's villa at Quercianelle near Castiglioncello. In the 1860s, Diego Martelli, a patron of the arts, hosted several of the Macchiaoli painters on his estate at Castiglioncello, allowing them to work in natural surroundings. Critics speak of those years as the School of Castiglioncello. Cecchi's familiarity with Macchiaoli painting would have influenced Visconti when he was preparing *Senso*.⁹⁷

Regarding the effect of Fattori's battle scenes on Visconti, Raffaele Monti notes that, having become archetypal images for the average Italian, Visconti found them unavoidable.⁹⁸ Monti cites Cecchi who claimed that Visconti had looked at Fattori's panoramic views, compositions, perspectives, and use of colour without falling into imitation.⁹⁹ Cecchi also noted that Fattori also recurs in Visconti's defining and lining up of a simple camp, where the contour lines disappear, freeing the colour, and indicating space and perspective.¹⁰⁰ Undoubtedly Cecchi referred to paintings like *Accampamento* (c.1860), where the white tarpaulins stand like almost abstract patches of colour.¹⁰¹ Monti also compares this painting to the shots of the Italian army camp prior to the battle of Custoza in *Senso*. While Visconti's shots were certainly not copied from *Accampamento*, the filmmakers certainly were aware of the painting.¹⁰² From his perspective as costume designer Piero Tosi responded: 'All those people who talk about Fattori... It was a natural fact, if you do the reconstruction of a historical uniform as faithfully as did Visconti, the backpack, the casing, the kepi with the small case, etc. Now, if you show that all in the countryside of the Veneto, then it looks a bit like Fattori, but a literal reference it is not. But why does one think of Fattori? Because of the accuracy with which he constructed the scenes, both on the Austrian and Italian sides, plus the landscape'.¹⁰³

96 For decades Cecchi's granddaughter Caterina D'Amico has organized exhibitions on Visconti, published many catalogues and volumes, and has been the keeper of the Visconti heritage, not only his films but also the Visconti archive (Fondo Visconti). The latter is now kept at Fondazione Istituto Gramsci in Rome.

97 When asked about this, Suso Cecchi D'Amico denied a link between the nineteenth-century School of Castiglioncello and the location of her family's country house. Interview with Suso Cecchi D'Amico, 11 May 2004.

98 Monti 1979, pp. 24-5.

99 Cecchi 1954, p. 26.

100 Cecchi 1938, p. 76.

101 See <http://www.bildindex.de/obj07900473.html>.

102 Raffaele Monti would afterwards continue to publish on Fattori. He was co-author of the exhibition catalogue *Giovanni Fattori. Dipinti 1854-1906* (Firenze: Artificio, 1987) and more recently published the monograph *Giovanni Fattori 1825-1908* (Livorno: Sillabe Edizioni, 2002). He organized the move of the Fattori museum to the Villa Mimbelli in 1994 and he curated the catalogue of the museum collection in the same year.

103 Interview with Piero Tosi, 14 April 2004. Charles Tashiro indicates a third similarity, namely that of detachment to the subject with Fattori and Visconti. Charles Tashiro, *Pretty pictures: production design and the history film* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), p. 90.



Fig. 4. Giovanni Fattori, *La battaglia di Custoza* (1880). Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Rome.

Giuseppe Rotunno, the cameraman on *Senso*, has said that Visconti and his crew went to see exhibitions on Fattori, including a huge one at Museo Civico Giovanni Fattori at the Villa Fabricotti in Livorno.¹⁰⁴ The exhibition was called *Giovanni Fattori. Dipinti, disegni, acqueforti* and ran from August to September 1953, where a catalogue was also published.¹⁰⁵ Cecchi participated in the exhibition's *comitato consultivo* while Dario Durbè was the curator. Fattori's large heroic battle scenes from the 1860s were presented, such as his sketch for *La battaglia di Magenta/ Il campo italiano dopo la battaglia di Magenta* (1860), which portrayed a covered wagon with nuns as nurses (a similar nun-laden cart also passes on the Ponte Visconteo in *Senso*, see the analysis of the scene in Chapter 9), the painting *Assalto alla Madonna della Scoperta* (1864), as well as the aforementioned intimate scene *Accampamento*.¹⁰⁶ Other battle scenes were missing, such as the large-scale paintings, *Il campo italiano dopo la battaglia di Magenta* (Florence, Galleria d'Arte Moderna, 1861-1862), *Il principe Amedeo ferito a Custoza* (Milano Brera, 1868-1870), and

104 Interview with Giuseppe Rotunno by Alessandro Marzo, in: Roberto Ellero ed., *Aldò tra cinema e fotografia* (Venezia: Comune di Venezia, 1987), p. 63. The museum in Livorno has the largest collection of works by Fattori. Right from its foundation it acquired Fattori's history painting *Assalto alla Madonna della Scoperta*. Since the late nineteenth century Livorno owns the largest collection of etchings and drawings by Fattori, donated to the museum by his heir. The museum specializes in Italian nineteenth century and early twentieth-century art. Since the 1930s, the local museum was renamed Museo Civico Giovanni Fattori. After the war – and so when Visconti visited it – the collection was hosted at the Villa Fabricotti, and since 1994 at the Villa Mimbelli.

105 Dario Durbè ed., *Giovanni Fattori. Dipinti, disegni, acqueforti* (Firenze: AGAF, 1953).

106 While Piero Tosi said that Fattori painted the Ponte Visconteo, this doesn't appear in the 1953 catalogue of the Livorno exhibition. Interview with Piero Tosi, 14 April 2004. Fattori did paint the Italian artillery in action similar to the scene on the Ponte Visconteo in *Senso*, e.g. in *Manovre d'artiglieria* (c. 1880, private collection). See also Giovanni Fattori, *Episodio dell'assalto alla Madonna della Scoperta* (private collection, 1864), Sebastiano De Albertis, *L'artiglieria della III Divisione all'attacco durante la battaglia di San Martino* (Milano: Fondazione Cariplo, 1887) and Michele Cammarano, *La battaglia di San Martino* (Rome: GNAM, 1880-1883).

La battaglia di Custoza (1876-1880), which had come into the possession of the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna [GNAM] in Rome as early as 1883.¹⁰⁷

Durbè writes in the Livorno exhibition catalogue about *La battaglia di Custoza*: 'For at least five years Fattori devoted himself to *La battaglia di Custoza*, from 1876 to 1880. Like the Macchiaioli paintings from 1866 and the paintings from around 1870... the painting *Custoza* plays a key role in the development of Fattori's art, because it is a sign of a radical change of direction in his painting. It is the reappearance of the bourgeois inspiration in a new form, closely connected with the everyday reality of the people in the Umbertine times [King Umberto I, reigned 1878-1900]. It is not the enthusiasm, the noble impulsiveness of [the images of] the battles of Magenta and Montebello, which essentially are still present in *La Madonna della Scoperta* and *Il Principe Amedeo*, but it is the heavy duty to the homeland by those who might not understand anymore one's own sacrifice. "My ideal", Fattori later wrote, "has been the military subjects, all those courageous guys I've seen sacrificing themselves for the homeland".... *Custoza* arises from the bitterness of a moment in Italian history, whereas [Mario] Tinti rightly noted "a high and lofty ideal, the impulsivity and noble courage of the voluntary and conspiratorial fathers are exchanged for the low-indulgence and the pettiness of the businessmen and shopkeepers that are their sons ... a curious and money-hungry world". It is from this moment that Fattori begins to feel his isolation in modern society and starts to feel attracted by new human and artistic interests. In his paintings increasingly social and political problems appear'.¹⁰⁸

We recognize in *Senso*'s imagery this bitterness over the failed Risorgimento, but not only there. While Visconti's *The Leopard* already indicates the way politics would go in the 1860s through the behaviour of the money-hungry and fraudulent Mayor Don Calogero and the arrogant, immoral Tancredi, by *L'innocente* (*The Innocent*, 1976) this has led to the hypocrisy, lack of human warmth, and the absence of the noble ideals of the Umbertine era. One could say that Visconti looks back at the events of the Risorgimento and its aftermath with the sensibility of Fattori's *La battaglia di Custoza*, and in terms of the lost battle. The painting seems to be the key to Visconti's cinema, a sense of personal and collective failure. Unlike Durbè, however, Visconti writes history from a Gramscian perspective in his insistence that the Risorgimento was a war waged by the middle class and elite while the peasantry remained out of sight. Visconti stresses this in *Senso* with compositions that show farmers coming back from the harvest being overtaken left

107 In 1953 not only a big Fattori exhibition in Livorno took place, but also in Florence: *Dipinti, disegni e incisioni di Giovanni Fattori alla Galleria dell'Accademia, 1-20 novembre 1953* (Firenze: Società delle Belle Arti, 1953). Presumably Visconti and his crew would have also seen the simultaneous exhibition on Fattori in Florence, as Rotunno mentioned they saw more than one exhibition.

108 Durbè 1953, pp. 25-6.

and right by infantry, artillery, and cavalry (see Chapter 9).¹⁰⁹ War or no war, life in the countryside will go on.¹¹⁰

Returning to Hayez's work, Cecchi was not enthusiastic: 'The romance of Hayez and the Lombard painters was, like that of Manzoni and later that of the Tuscan painters, just inserting a kind of homely and, philologically considered, more consanguineous, and natural kind of classicism.¹¹¹ [...] His love for the real constantly assured you of a sharp quality in his definition of the line. But how you wished that he had equally remembered the authenticity of colour and Venice!¹¹² [...] If we leave aside *Il bacio*, a key work of richer and more eloquent range, it is in the flowers of *La Desolata* or of *Vaso sopra un tappeto turco* that Hayez achieves greater variety and liveliness, with a slight transparency, freeing itself from those dark relationships that give a funeral mood to so many of his portraits.¹¹³ [...] But in all those portraits of more or less well-known people, it is the interpretation of the person that dominates. Like the British portrait painters of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Hayez was, in a sense, the historian of the intellectual aristocracy of his time. His rather strict testimony is perhaps the most appropriate in its accordance with that of the nobility. Italy would add other equally venerable names to his but never another example of such a harmonious and select union'.¹¹⁴

Thus Hayez belongs to the aristocratic world of Franz and Livia, a world that, as Cecchi remarks, is clearly disappearing by 1860. The light is heavy and melancholic. It is the product of a studio: a noble ornamental hypothesis, derived from a lot of culture, instead of having arisen from a fruitful and innate intuition. 'Hayez was still a neo-classicist, who timidly bathed his characters in a light that was filtered by the Venetian backgrounds'.¹¹⁵ He may well be one of

109 According to Marxist theory, only the working class could effectuate political and social change. The Italian Marxist politician and writer Antonio Gramsci considered the Risorgimento a failed revolution. He knew well that there was no working class around 1860, let alone an organized one. But he argued that the struggle of the Italians in fact had only been a movement of the middle class, while the peasantry had not been ideologically mobilized. Gramsci's publication *Lettere dal carcere* (1947) was massively influential in leftist Italian circles in the late 1940s and 1950s. In addition, the British historian Denis Mack Smith in his *Cavour and Garibaldi* (1949) also stressed how Italy after its unification betrayed its liberal ideas by losing contact with the people and being vulnerable to violence and political opportunism. In the 1950s-1960s Mack Smith, though a non-Marxist, was equally popular in Italy. See Norma Bouchard, *Risorgimento in Modern Italian Culture. Revisiting the Nineteenth Century past in History, Narrative and Cinema* (Danvers: Rosemont, 2005), pp. 31-2.

110 The Fondo Visconti contains only four pictures for documentation, referring to art in *Senso*. The first is a black and white photograph of a sketch by Giovanni Fattori, before 1860. Pictured are soldiers who are lying in and in front of a tent, while in the back a chariot is drawn by four horses and cavalymen. There is also a black and white photograph of a watercolour sketch by Fattori, *Battaglia d'Italia. Feriti al campo* (c.1866, then Mario Galli, Raccolta d'arte). The third picture is an image by Alinari often cited in the literature on painting by Fattori, *Il campo italiano dopo la battaglia di Magenta* (1860, GNAM, Rome). Fattori, therefore, has certainly been used for documentation, though not as a direct quotation. Finally, there is a black and white photograph of a steel engraving of Gandini after a painting by Najmiler: *Fuga degli austriaci al di la del Mincio* (undated, Milan, Francesco Pagnoni editore, printed by Falione). Here we see Austrians withdrawing over a bridge, which might be the Ponte Visconteo.

111 Cecchi 1938, p. 17.

112 Ibid., p. 17.

113 Ibid., p. 18.

114 Ibid., pp. 17-18.

115 Ibid., p. 18.

the four or five most important nineteenth-century Italian painters, says Cecchi, yet he must have felt that he had been formed in a transition period.¹¹⁶ Only the next generation would strike a warmer, more poetic, more imaginative way. In August–September 1953, during *Senso*'s pre-production, the exhibition *Il ritratto nella pittura lombarda dell'Ottocento* was held at the Kursaal in Verbania. Earlier in April–June, Milan's Palazzo Sociale also exhibited *La donna nell'arte da Hayez a Modigliani*. Hayez's work was represented at both and it is possible that Visconti may have seen them.¹¹⁷

Between the two world wars art critics did not esteem Hayez.¹¹⁸ In the postwar era, this low estimation of Hayez, as well as that of Italian neoclassicism and of Italian painting from the early nineteenth century more generally, changed. The art historian Fernando Mazzocca was particularly instrumental in reevaluating late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Italian art. In 1996 Mazzocca organized the *catalogue raisonné* of Hayez and he published another work entirely devoted to *Il bacio* in 2003. Today exhibitions and publications continue to foster Hayez's revaluation – specialists have related his work to Delacroix and to the German historical painting of Schnorr, Kaulbach, and the Nazarene. For Visconti, however, Cecchi was the authority in the field of nineteenth-century painting and was undoubtedly an important source for Visconti's conception of Hayez and his oeuvre. The Fondo Visconti still holds a copy of Cecchi's *Pittura italiana dell'Ottocento*. At the time of *Senso*'s production, then, Hayez was definitely known, though more for his portraits than his history painting, *Il bacio* being the key exception.¹¹⁹

Visconti's appropriation of and comment on the painting

What would happen if we follow Baxandall's approach in *Patterns of Intentions* (see Introduction) to forgo speaking of influence in favour of forms of appropriation and project this onto *Senso*'s pictorial quotation of *Il bacio*? Considered this way, do we not risk just putting *Il bacio* next to a moment in *Senso* and then simply affirming that Hayez has affected Visconti? Rather it's what Visconti *did* with the painting that's important. He consciously reproduced the pose of *Il bacio*'s lovers, but without having his characters wear the same costumes, using neither

116 Ibid., p. 20.

117 M. Valsecchi, *Il ritratto nella pittura lombarda dell'Ottocento* (Milano 1953). Ugo Nebbia, *La donna nell'arte da Hayez a Modigliani* (Milano: Edizione del Milione, 1953). When asking Suso Cecchi D'Amico in 2004 whether the reference to Hayez by Visconti was a hint by her father Emilio Cecchi, she didn't know but could well imagine this, as Cecchi and Visconti had had such extensive talks on nineteenth-century painting. Interview with Suso Cecchi D'Amico, 11 May 2004.

118 Emilio Cecchi, *Pittura italiana dell'Ottocento* (Roma: Societ'a editrice d'arte illustrata, 1926). Ugo Ojetti, *La pittura italiana dell'Ottocento* (Milano/Roma: Bassetti e Tumminelli, 1929). See also E. Sommarè, *Storia dei pittori italiani dell'Ottocento* (Esame 1928).

119 Interview with Fernando Mazzocca, 12 July 2004. For Hayez's reputation see also Fernando Mazzocca, 'Il genio pittorico di Francesco Hayez', in: idem ed., *Hayez. Dal mito al bacio* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1998), p. 13–17. Mazzocca is now recognized as the expert on Italian art of the first half of the 19th century. For instance in 2005 he curated the exhibition 'Romantici e Macchiaioli. Giuseppe Mazzini e la grande pittura europea' (Palazzo Ducale, Genua 2005–6). By means of the now accepted art of the Macchiaioli, he was again the advocate of Italian Romantic painting such as that of Hayez. He also curated the accompanying catalogue *Romantici e Macchiaioli. Giuseppe Mazzini e la grande pittura europea* (Milano: Skira, 2005).



Fig. 5 (left). *Senso*
(Luchino Visconti
1954).



Fig. 6 (right).
Telemaco Signorini,
*La toilette del
mattino* (1898).
Private collection.

the same colours nor the same setting. He thus gives an aesthetic, historical and political commentary. A dramatisation of reality, writing history through images and a commentary on class-based society take centre stage.

First, *Il bacio* is a *melodramatic* painting. No doubt this played a part in Visconti's selection. It suits *Senso's* operatic setting, in which the opera staged within the film's opening scene works like a kind of Chinese box.¹²⁰ *Senso* itself proves to be a film opera. Not only does the opera elicit strong reactions from the filmic audience, even the protagonists start to behave operatically (see Chapter 10 for Visconti's use of mirrors in this regard). Livia tells Franz that she loves opera as long as it is on stage, but once she's in love, ironically, she behaves like a diva herself, with all the requisite intense emotions. Visconti's choice for *Il bacio* had to do with *passion* – the painting depicts sensuality. In *Senso* the embrace is the film's most passionate moment. Livia has again become infatuated with Franz. She

120 For the idea of *Senso* as film opera, see for example Giorgio Tinazzi, 'Senso: un melodramma in abisso', in: Veronica Pravadelli ed., *Il cinema di Luchino Visconti* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2000), pp. 145-56.

surrenders to and hides him. For a short time their idyll seems to stand apart from political and social reality, namely that she is married, that he belongs to the enemy and that he is required to go to war, facing a reasonable risk of dying.

Hayez's *Bacio* depicts a historical scene but, as in Verdi's operas, the painting is also an indirect *commentary on contemporary history*, that of the Risorgimento. The medieval volunteer who bids farewell is essentially a costumed nineteenth-century man, just like the opera singer from Verdi's *Il Trovatore* in *Senso*'s opening scene, who with his aria, 'Di quella pira...' elicits revolutionary thoughts in the crowd.¹²¹ Visconti undertook *historiography* with his film, in that he linked the intrigue of Camillo Boito's late nineteenth-century novel with the Gramscian historical images of the 'failed' Risorgimento – the replacement of the old ruling elite by a new class without any change for the underclass. This is quite clear in *Senso*'s war scenes where the soldiers and farmers both literally and figuratively take different directions (see Chapter 10 for the analysis and the images). Visconti also critiqued twentieth-century Italian history – the disappointment among those who had fought against the Germans and the Fascists over the lack of improvement after the disappearance of the old rulers (Mussolini and the monarchy). *Senso*, then, is also an indirect commentary on twentieth century politics, just as both Hayez and Fattori had done in their nineteenth-century paintings.

Between Hayez's work and that of the Macchiaioli there is a *class difference*. Besides his history painting, Hayez was the portraitist of choice for the early nineteenth-century Milanese aristocracy from which Visconti originated. His aristocratic style – an expressive but restrained, subdued Romanticism, close to the French academicism and historicism of Ingres and Delaroche – fit perfectly with his clients. Hayez's painting therefore contrasts with the bourgeois painting of Macchiaioli and Fattori with their exterior scenes, fast strokes and light colours – an important source of inspiration for *Senso*'s outdoor shots and battle scenes. The consciousness of this *class difference* also permeated Visconti and his staff. While Visconti and his costume designers Marcel Escoffier and Piero Tosi looked at the bourgeois painting of the Macchiaioli and to daguerreotypes of the middle class for Livia's staff, they looked to the paintings of the aristocracy and the *haute bourgeoisie* of Vienna and Paris for inspiration for Livia's costumes (see Chapter 5).¹²² According to Piero Tosi, 'There are three precise painterly references in *Senso*. One is *Il bacio* by Hayez because of the gesture. For her dressing gown, we used a neo-Gothic inspiration, those huge sleeves. This neo-Gothic taste was typical of the Second Empire, for the mid-nineteenth century. Not only did the sleeve express that neo-Gothic idea but also the back. It was not just the taste that respected the historical moment, it also belonged to the experience of a bored woman, a gothic tale, a love story, the world of Livia, in short'.¹²³ So Livia's outfit emphasizes the operatic sensibility of the film and of the kissing scene in particular.

121 A famous historical example exists of an uprising in response to an opera. In 1830 the Brussels performance of *La Muette de Portici* by Auber, an opera about the seventeenth-century revolt of the Neapolitans against Spanish rule, led to the Belgian Revolution and eventually Belgian independence.

122 Two daguerreotypes were published in the original edition of *Senso*'s screenplay, edited by G.B. Cavallaro (Bologna: Cappelli, 1955), ill. 44 and 45.

123 Interview with Piero Tosi, 14 April 2004.

The citation of *Il bacio* becomes even clearer when looking at a second quotation in *Senso*. For the scene where Livia goes up to Franz in his rented rooms in Venice, Visconti used one of the Macchiaioli, Telemaco Signorini (1835-1901). Livia is overdressed for the Austrian soldiers who receive her unashamed, some being half naked. Signorini's *La toilette del mattino*, a.k.a. *La toeletta del mattino* (1898) served as the basis for this scene. The perspective of the room is the same: a diagonal from front right to rear left. The art director also created the same structure in the beamed ceiling and floor. Visconti appropriates the composition and grouping as well: in the middle people are sitting at a table and in the back someone lies on a couch. Even the window with the little marquise and the incoming sunlight is in the same position. *La toilette del mattino* represents a Florentine brothel at the end of the nineteenth century, painted in a raw, naturalistic style. According to art critic Vittorio Pica, it was related to the naturalistic literature of Giovanni Verga, whose novel, *I Malavoglia* (1881), was the basis for Visconti's neorealist fishermen's drama, *La terra trema*.¹²⁴ In 1930 *La toilette del mattino* came into the possession of the famous Milanese conductor Arturo Toscanini, whose house Visconti visited as a child, as they were almost neighbours.¹²⁵ Visconti was very close to Toscanini's daughters Wally and Wanda. He knew the artwork well and came up with the suggestion to use it in *Senso*. During the film's preparation, he drove his employees to Milan to show them the painting at Toscanini's house. As Tosi recalls, 'So we visited Wally Toscanini, Toscanini was still there but now really old, and in the living room hung that painting. It would be copied exactly with the same angle, the same colours'.¹²⁶ When using this citation, Visconti was probably not only interested in the composition but also in the vulgarity of the scene. In fact, Livia is a 'customer' as well – buying Franz's love. Just to remind us, Franz tells her so at the end of the film. The space of the tenement is well below Livia's position. The officers mock her and show her what a womanizer Franz is. The two citations are polar opposites. While Hayez represents the noble Lombard-Venetian romance – Livia's dream – Signorini stands for the harsh reality of deception, humiliation and vulgarity.

Another quotation could have taken a prominent place in the film, but because of weather conditions and the breakthrough of Maria Callas everything changed. Initially *Senso* would not have started with the commotion at the Teatro la Fenice, the Venice opera house, during the performance of Verdi's opera *Il Trovatore*, but with one in St. Mark's Square. As Piero Tosi recounts, 'The opening scene would

124 Vittorio Pica, in *Emporium* 1909, pp. 143-4; quoted in: Dario Durbè ed., *I Macchiaioli* (Florence: Centro Di, 1976), pp. 283-4. Exhibition catalogue 'I Macchiaioli', Forte del Belvedere, Firenze, May-July 1976. Pica claims that for years Signorini did not dare to show his painting in public because of its daring subject matter. In 1909 it was publicly exhibited in Venice where Pica saw it for the first time.

125 Interview with Suso Cecchi D'Amico, 11 May 2004. See also: Elisabetta Palminteri Matteucci ed., *Toscanini tra note e colori. Collezione Toscanini. Catalogo dei dipinti e delle sculture* (Milano: Biblioteca di via Senato Edizioni, 2007), pp. 114-15. At Toscanini's the canvas hang simply in the living room, even if his wife was not too keen on it.

126 Interview with Piero Tosi, 14 April 2004. In another version of this story, Cecchi, on his daughter's, Suso Cecchi D'Amico, instigation, borrowed the painting from the Toscanini's and brought it to the set. Antonio Frintino, Pier Marco De Santi eds., *Mauro Bolognini, cinema tra letteratura pittura e musica* (Pistoia: Brigata del Leoncino, 1996), p. 45.



Fig. 7. Michele Cammarano, *Caffè San Marco* (1869). Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Rome.

have been on the Piazza San Marco, but when we arrived in Venice it had begun to rain. During the move from Vicenza to Venice the tragedy of the death of Aldo [Graziati] occurred, which was a tragedy for everyone... With that drama on our shoulders we arrived in Venice and there was rain, rain, rain. We were already behind schedule. The first meeting [of the two main characters] was to be after the noon Mass at St. Mark's Church... The starting point for that scene was the painting by Michele Cammarano [*Caffè San Marco*], with that woman with the scarf, with the chairs with straw seats. Livia had a costume that was taken exactly from the painting of Cammarano, the one here in Valle Giulia [the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in Rome]. The canvas would be re-staged, but not in detail, at the moment he puts his foot on hers. She hates him but still feels attracted. But all this did not happen, but because it kept raining, so everything was transferred to La Fenice. Incidentally, La Fenice had already been a source of inspiration to Visconti, which is shown in *Senso* because the real meeting, the formal introduction, only takes place there. But after Visconti saw Callas in *Il Trovatore* in Milan, he changed the whole scenario. I remember it well. Originally the scenario followed the story much more faithfully, but when Visconti came back from Milan he was so impressed by Callas that he only saw her, the proscenium, and *Il Trovatore*. From there, that thread of melodrama in the film was created. Maria was still in South America and so we could not use her in the film. And that's a shame, because otherwise there would be still something left over from her. To me she's still magic'.¹²⁷

127 Interview with Piero Tosi, 14 April 2004. According to the different versions of the scenario of *Senso* at the Fondo Visconti, the film was not even to start with the scene on the Piazza San Marco. First a prologue would take place, making the whole film a flashback, just like in the story by Boito. As previously indicated, it is striking that during the screen writing Visconti could still sometimes start from a flashback, but would abandon this device in later stages. For an excellent, detailed discussion ...

Caffè San Marco (1869) is Cammarano's most famous painting.¹²⁸ Also known as *Piazza San Marco a Venezia*, it strikingly depicts a moment in Venice *after* the battle with the Austrians, in short, the liberated Venice, unlike the setting of *Senso*, where the Austrians still occupy the city.¹²⁹

The painting of the Macchiaioli was less smooth and historical than that of Hayez. From the 1920s on, the Macchiaioli were claimed as Italian counterparts to the French Realists and Impressionists, but with the political dimension of the Risorgimento – even if that only describes a part of their work. The partiality to Fattori, the Macchiaioli and later the *divisionisti* (Italian counterparts of the Neo-Impressionists and Symbolists) by critics such as Cecchi was at the expense of Neoclassical and Romantic painting. It took a while before Hayez received his due. It also meant that contemporaries who did not belong to the avant-garde were neglected. On the other hand, *Il bacio* is a painting that, apart from Hayez's general reputation, has always spoken to the public, especially in Italy, and has obviously facilitated recognition, especially in a mass medium like the cinema. This was the same in 1954 (see also Chapter 5).¹³⁰ *Senso* created a kind of *Gone with the Wind* feeling: romance during wartime, just as in Margaret Mitchell's 1936 novel and Victor Fleming's (and George Cukor's) 1939 film. Incidentally, *Gone with the Wind* was released in Italy only in 1950 and thus was rather fresh in Italian memory at the time of *Senso*'s production.

Visconti's quotation of Hayez is such an important moment in *Senso* that he slows down and almost stops the film. He draws the audience to it. This was not a unique action. Film history has a tradition of so-called *Living Pictures* or *tableaux animés*, with antecedents in the theatre, in which the citation of famous paintings is the attraction and often the climax of a film.¹³¹ Both the Living Pictures and the *tableaux vivants* involve the joy of recognition, recognising the famous painting – an artwork that we might well no longer recognize *now* because it has not become included in the modern canon – and where there should be a

...of the scenario versions of *Senso*, today still present at the Fondo Visconti, see Mauro Giori, *Poetica e prassi della trasgressione in Luchino Visconti, 1935-1962* (Milano: Argo/ Lampi di Stampa, 2011), pp. 113-88. NB Visconti wasn't the first film director to stage anti-Austrian reactions in an opera house, during a film set in the Risorgimento. In 1915 Carlo Campogalliani and Arrigo Frusta made for Ambrosio the historical film *Romanticismo*, which contains a scene quite similar to the opening scene in *Senso*. See <http://filmstarpostcards.blogspot.nl/2012/05/romanticismo.html>. *Romanticismo* was based on a play by Gerolamo Rovetta. The film clearly promoted Italy's involvement in the First World War. The film was released in September 1915, while Italy had declared war to Austria-Hungary in May of that year.

128 It is certainly not his only one. Bellonzi indicates the early work *Terremoto a Torre del Greco* (1861-2; Napoli, Museo di San Martino), a dramatic depiction of an earthquake in Sicily. Bellonzi speculates that the painting may have inspired Renato Guttuso's *Fuga dall'Etna* (1938-9). Fortunato Bellonzi, *Architettura, pittura, scultura dal Neoclassicismo al Liberty* (Roma: Quasar, 1978), p. 106.

129 After the battle of Custoza, where the Italians ignominiously lost (just like at the naval engagement at Lissa), the Austrians lost on their turn. They allied with various German states such as Bavaria in 1866 at the battle of Königgrätz (Sadova) but lost against Prussia, who had formed alliances with a number of the North German states and Italy. At the subsequent Treaty of Vienna, Austria ceded the Veneto, the province of Venice, to the French Emperor Napoleon III, who then ceded it to the Kingdom of Italy. Trieste and its immediate surroundings remained in Austrian hands.

130 This may also explain why around 1954 the press did compare *Senso* with the Macchiaioli but almost neglected the appropriation of European academic history and genre painting.

131 Blom 2001.

common understanding between creator and spectator. In the faithful imitation of the painting, one trades – albeit for a short time and after careful choreography – the flat surface for a truly three-dimensional effect. In addition, the authors hope to provide the viewer with the aesthetic pleasure of an *aemulatio* of a virtual three-dimensional canvas.¹³²

Does Visconti's appropriation of the pose of *Il bacio* create a *repositioning* of the painting? To some extent, yes. He parodies the original noble sense of militancy and sacrifice by depicting a young opportunistic soldier who rather deserts than fights, and an older woman who betrays her husband, her morals and her country, by passing the money of the Italian freedom fighters to her lover, who belongs to the enemy camp. Visconti deliberately provides a commentary on the painting's original meaning, and then takes over from Hayez the dramatisation of reality and historiography though through other means. Moreover, he adds a detached analysis of class-based Italian society. Yet Visconti does not forget Hayez's imagination for romance and passion. It is that side of *Il bacio* which is exploited in souvenirs and postcards to this day.

132 In the Renaissance *aemulatio* in rhetorics and the arts stood for the creative, free adaptation of the admired example, aiming to match or surpass the model. J.D.P. Warners, 'Translatio – imitatio – aemulatio', in: *NTG* 49 (1956), pp. 289-95; 50 (1957), pp. 82-8, 193-201.

Archaeology of the Set (I): Greuze and *The Leopard*

What results when we identify and analyse the presence of paintings and photographs in the sets of Visconti's films? Paintings are an ongoing presence there. They are often the natural accompaniments of bourgeois and aristocratic interiors, putting them on par with the other articles of furniture, objects, and wall decorations. Occasionally, they play a larger role as an expression of a mood or as a commentary on the protagonists. Painted and photographed portraits of the main characters' loved ones occupy a special place in many of Visconti's films. He will often use his actors' performances, dialogue, framing or camera movements (zooms, tracking shots) to highlight and give them meaning, thus contributing to the narrative. While this sometimes occurs clearly onscreen, at other times these visual cues go unnoticed on an initial viewing and only become apparent upon closer inspection. Visconti's rich use of scenery gives so many different signals that we cannot absorb them in a single encounter.

Before we delve into our two case studies, allow me to offer a few examples. In *Senso*, Visconti clearly adapts the original frescoes in the Villa Godi-Malinverni (built 1537-1542), formerly called Villa Valmarana, at Lonedo near Lugo di Vicenza, which was the first villa designed by the famous sixteenth-century architect Andrea Palladio and which passes for Livia's villa in the film.¹³³ In the Stanza dell'Olimpo we see Franz standing beside a fresco by Giambattista Zelotti of an old man holding up a curtain for a young man. Franz's stature is thus doubled and the image gets a voyeuristic twist, as if we are looking at a scene involving a pimp. The young man points at something or someone offscreen left, doubling the actor's parallel look, the shot confirming Visconti's suggestion that Franz is a kind of prostitute and the director a pimp. In the Sala delle Muse e dei Poeti the heavenly background of gods and poets painted by Battista del Moro is desecrated by the worldly transactions in the foreground, where Livia gives her lover, Franz, the freedom fighters' money (see Chapter 1).¹³⁴ In the tenant's room in *White Nights* (*Le notti bianche*, 1957) we see a striking early twentieth-century painting that Mario Garbuglia, the set designer, purchased at an antique shop in Basel.¹³⁵ In *Rocco and His Brothers* (*Rocco*

133 The villa (1542) is the oldest remaining villa by the famous sixteenth century architect Andrea Palladio (1508-80).

134 Laurent Darbellay, 'Le gout de la peinture', in; Bax 2004, p. 32-4. In *Il fantasma del bello*, Roberto Campari actually claims that Visconti's exploitation of and predilection for real, historical settings in *Senso* such as the Teatro La Fenice and this villa with its frescoes, are more important than his references to Hayez, Signorini and Fattori. Campari 1994, pp. 57-8.

135 Interview with Mario Garbuglia, 3 May 2004.



Fig. 8. *L'innocente* (Luchino Visconti 1976).

e i suoi fratelli, 1960) the opulence and decadence of the gym owner, Morini (Roger Hanin), is emphasized by the art in his house: (a copy of) the portrait of Armand Roulin by van Gogh (see Chapter 5), a Claude Lorrain-like landscape, a portrait of a young boy, a nineteenth-century landscape with cows and a ditch, and several statues including a reproduction of the Uffizi Wrestlers and another one of the Drunken Silenus (see Fig. 112). Morini's homosexual orientation is suggested by the *repossoir* of the sculpture of two nude wrestlers (before, we have seen him watching Rocco and Simone in the shower). In the scene where Morini seduces a drunken Simone (Renato Salvatori), a TV is on while a strange, modernist music can be heard. Visconti shows television images of classic paintings that he associates with Morini. In the early 1960s, modern television was unattainable for poor people like Simone while high art would be far removed from his cultural understanding.¹³⁶ After Morini has insulted and knocked down Simone, and the two of them are seen gazing at each other in extreme close up, Morini switches off the TV, darkening the space. The shot implies that the two men then do something that cannot bear the light of day, which is deliberately left ambiguous as Visconti immediately cuts to the following scene.

In *L'innocente*, Tullio Hermil (Giancarlo Giannini) sees himself reflected in a mirror cabinet next to the crib with his hated, illegitimate child (see Chapter 10 and Fig. 348). In between, he sees a painting of Christ's head, symbolic of the philosophical and religious differences that stand between him, a Nietzschean atheist, and his wife, a devout Catholic. Christ's portrait, however, does not provide all the symbolic meaning; it forms part of a complex multi-layered image that comments on the Catholic faith of his wife, Giuliana (Laura Antonelli), which

136 Marco Pistoia extensively analysed the art on the television in *Rocco e i suoi fratelli*. Marco Pistoia, 'La televisione di Visconti', *Drammaturgia*, 7 (2000), pp. 37-52. In succession these paintings appear on Morini's television: *Saint George and the Dragon* (1505) by Raphael, *The Knight's Dream* (1504) by Raphael, *Danaë* (1554) by Titian, *The Fall of Man* (1565-70) by Titian, *La Tempesta/The Tempest* (1507-8) by Giorgione, and *The Bacchanal* (1519-20) by Titian. See also Mauro Giori, *Poetica e prassi della trasgressione in Luchino Visconti, 1935-1962* (Milan: Libraccio, 2011), pp. 213-14, and Youssef Ishagpour, *Visconti. Le sens et l'image* (Paris: Editions de la Différence, 1984), p. 31. Ishagpour states that the moment indicates that people no longer represent hope for renewal of humanist culture. Visconti marks the difference between the reality of art and the debasement of life.

prevents her from getting an abortion, despite his insistence. The combined mirror image of the trumped and emasculated atheist Tullio, the head of Christ (his enemy, Catholic faith), and the cradle with the bastard child (the result of Tullio's loss) functions like a cynical family portrait. Instead of the classic Oedipal situation of the son wanting to murder the father, here the father wants to kill his bastard child. The painting of Christ works as an omen as does an antique painting of a child, which we see when Giuliana comes home from her secret rendezvous and looks guiltily in the mirror (see Chapter 10). It does not matter whether *she* is aware of the imagery. Visconti conveys to *us* that there is a child on the way. This imagery is repeated later when Tullio erroneously thinks that Giuliana is returning home to have an abortion until he learns from her maid, to his consternation, that she is not returning and needs lighter clothes due to her pregnancy. The same antique painting of the child appears in this scene indicating the baby's immanent arrival, even though the portrait does not correspond to a *specific* character. It stands for *child* as a narrative theme or an incipient, not an actual, person.

Two prominent examples of paintings within Visconti's film sets that are both narrative props and signifiers are the *memento mori*-like painting in *The Leopard*, which reminds Don Fabrizio of his own death, and the family portraits in *Conversation Piece*, which contrast sharply with what happens in and around the spaces where they are hung. Why in the case of *The Leopard* did Visconti choose to focus on an eighteenth-century painting that was celebrated in its own time but did not have a good reputation when the film was released? What role should both art criticism and Lampedusa, the author of the original novel, play in our reception of this image in the film? Why were two paintings in *Conversation Piece* not copied verbatim but modified? And what role does the latter film's sculpture play set against the use of paintings? Finally, in what ways is Visconti's use of modern art in his sets distinctive, in comparison with that of his colleagues like Fellini or Hitchcock (see also Chapter 7)?¹³⁷

Greuze and *The Leopard*

Halfway through the sumptuous ball in *The Leopard*, Don Fabrizio Corbera, Prince of Salina (Burt Lancaster) walks into a room that appears to be the library of his host, Don Diego di Ponteleone. In the first part of the scene Don Fabrizio is alone and silent – we see only his actions. He is tired of the whirling action of the ball and is seeking out some calm. He pours a glass and mops his forehead. Sitting on a large Chesterfield sofa, he looks at the painting in front of him: an eighteenth-century artwork. An old man lies on his deathbed while wildly gesturing women and children are situated around him. To the right is a younger man, lean, hunched, tired, and in shabby clothes; at his feet are crutches, he is apparently limping. An elderly woman directs him to the man in bed. Don Fabrizio becomes intrigued, examines the painting up close and, satisfied, lights a cigar, but that one does not please him. The painting fascinates him more than his cigar. At that moment, his nephew Tancredi Falconeri (Alain Delon) and his fiancée Angelica Sedara

137 For paintings depicted on early modern paintings like those by Johannes Vermeer, see Stoichita 2015, pp. 180-204.



Fig. 9 (top). *The Leopard* (Luchino Visconti 1963). Fig. 10 (bottom, left). Jean-Baptiste Greuze, *La malédiction paternelle* (1777). Musée du Louvre, Paris. Fig. 11 (bottom, right). Jean-Baptiste Greuze, *Le fils puni* (1778). Musée du Louvre, Paris.

(Claudia Cardinale) enter. The dialogue between the three elucidates Fabrizio's interpretation of the painting. It reminds him of his own mortality and makes him wonder if he will die in the same way. The other two, still in the flush of the ball, are embarrassed (Angelica) and shaken (Tancredi). Angelica breaks the resulting silence by asking Don Fabrizio flatteringly and most seductively to dance with her. The scene immediately takes a very different turn. The older man appears almost as smitten with Angelica as Tancredi and accepts her request. Death is momentarily postponed.

The reputation of Greuze and *Le fils puni*

The painting that Don Fabrizio studies so intently is a copy of *Le fils puni* (1778) by Jean-Baptiste Greuze (1725-1805). It is the counterpart of a diptych that hangs in the Louvre, the first of which is entitled *La malédiction paternelle* (1777). The paintings are also known as *Le fils ingrat* (part 1) and *Le mauvais fils puni* (part 2). In *La malédiction paternelle* a father curses his degenerate son for forsaking his family by entering the army. On the right a recruiter from the army is laughing in his sleeve. *Le fils puni* shows the son's punishment. Having become crippled,

emaciated, and stripped of his sumptuous attire, the son returns home – but too late as his father has just died. The family is impoverished as shown by the wretched bed, despite the theatrical overhang. Their gestures express grief, despair, and reproach. Both paintings have a melodramatic setting resembling *tableaux vivants*. They connect the people with each other – the mother in both paintings looks at the son but refers to the father. The paintings demonstrate a moral lesson, typical of later eighteenth-century French painting.

At the Paris Salon of 1765, Denis Diderot enthusiastically discussed sketches of both paintings. He described *Le fils puni* as follows: ‘He has been on campaign. He comes back, and at what time? At the very moment that his father has passed away. Everything has changed considerably in the house. It was the home of the indulgence. It is now that of sadness and poverty’.¹³⁸ Diderot summed up the work of Greuze as: ‘Beau, très beau, sublime, tout, tout’.¹³⁹ He was emotionally touched by their pathos, so much so that he saw elements in the sketches that are certainly not in the final paintings.¹⁴⁰ But in 1765, both paintings still had to be painted and Diderot suspected that, if they were painted at all, they probably would be unsalable because Rococo paintings by François Boucher, which Diderot clearly ranked much lower, were far more popular. ‘If they are painted’, Diderot wrote, ‘Boucher will rather sell fifty of his unchaste and flat puppets than Greuze his two sublime paintings’.¹⁴¹ Diderot was indeed one of the few who appreciated the sketches at that time. The British art historian and Greuze specialist, Anita Brookner, confirms this: ‘With these he made his first essay into the realism of conscience, no longer blandishing his public but actually disturbing it. [...] Not only do the compositions form natural climaxes, [...] but the figures are more alive, and the wonderful chiaroscuro casts a genuine light of horror over the scene. The reaction of the public was unfavourable. People resented being jolted from the routine comforts of *sensibilité* by this almost English panorama of curses, ruin, and death, and twelve years passed before Greuze produced the finished pictures’.¹⁴²

When the final paintings were presented in 1777 and 1778, tastes had changed and they were an overwhelming success. As Brookner explains, ‘This is because *sensibilité*, now approaching its decadence and craving stronger stimulants, was turning to the glooms and passions of English pre-romanticism’.¹⁴³ In the paintings the ‘couleur locale’ of the sketches had completely disappeared. The persons now seem to be finished, though not recognisable: ‘Their heads are noble, they express “passions”, and, significantly enough, the women’s dresses all have the character of draperies. Even the hair is plaited à la grecque. The slow classical gestures

138 Denis Diderot, *Salon de 1765*. <http://www.educnet.education.fr/louvre/greuze/d-ingrat.htm> Diderot named also the first part *Le fils ingrât*.

139 Seznec-Adhémar, *Diderot Salons* (1765), II, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), pp. 157-60.

140 Diderot for example compares the ordinary but decent bed in *La malédiction paternelle* with the poor bed without mattress in *Le fils puni*, but in the first painting no real bed is recognisable. He also interprets the older soldier standing in the doorway right as the one who causes the son to come and say goodbye. In the final painting he comes across as a rather villainous figure, with his hand half in front of his face and his foul smile.

141 Denis Diderot, *Salon de 1765*. <http://www.educnet.education.fr/louvre/greuze/d-ingrat.htm>.

142 Anita Brookner, ‘Jean Baptiste Greuze I’, *The Burlington Magazine* 98, 638 (May 1956), p. 161.

143 Idem, ‘Jean Baptiste Greuze II’, *The Burlington Magazine* 98, 639 (June 1956), p. 195.

gain an additional heaviness from the greater thickness of the brush strokes'.¹⁴⁴ In short, the picturesque in the sketches had been exchanged for an emphasis on emotional and moral crisis, thus anticipating the classicism of Jacques-Louis David, who apparently studied Greuze's work. Or as the American art historian Robert Rosenblum – much less positively – wrote about the painted version of *Le fils puni*: 'In the later, painted interpretation (1778) of this pathetic scene, Greuze is even more explicit in his close allegiance to the Hamilton-Poussin deathbed composition, merely transforming the Greco-Roman world into the workaday costumes and furnishings of the Third Estate, though preserving such hints of academic pomp as the sweeping curtains above the body of the wizened and long-suffering father'.¹⁴⁵ Both paintings are now considered two of the many masterpieces in the Louvre.¹⁴⁶

Greuze's reputation was already declining at the end of his life. In 1769, the elite Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture (Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture) turned down his desire to be included as a history painter (the highest category), they wanted to accept him only as a genre painter. The proud Greuze never recovered from the humiliation.¹⁴⁷ The French Revolution then made him destitute. In 1793 he divorced his wife who had cheated on him for years and had squandered his money. Eventually he died penniless in 1805 despite some painting commissions early in the Napoleonic era. Only after 1850, under the Second Empire, did Greuze's star rise again as eighteenth-century painting was rediscovered by critics such as Théophile Thoré, Arsène Houssaye and, in particular, Edmond and Jules de Goncourt in their book *L'Art du dix-huitième siècle* (1859). Yet, Edmond had nothing good to say about Greuze's large paintings: 'Today the charm of Greuze, his dedication, his originality, and his strength is still expressed there and only there, in those little children's heads. They only make up for all weaknesses, all falsities and all poverty in the colour, which are so visible in [his] large canvases... with his sloppy whites, the overall range sometimes so

144 Ibid, p. 195.

145 In terms of composition *Le fils puni* would be based on Nicholas Poussin's *Death of Germanicus* and Gavin Hamilton's *Dead Hector Mourned*. Robert Rosenblum, *Transformations in Late Eighteenth Century Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), pp. 37-8. This book was first published in 1967 but Rosenblum did the research in the 1950s and in 1964 his manuscript was ready, as he writes in his preface. Already in 1956 Rosenblum wrote his dissertation on the art of the eighteenth century, but this has never been published: *The International Style of 1800: A Study in Linear Abstraction*, 1956. Anthony Clark claimed that in terms of composition *Le fils puni* not only harks back to Poussin's *Death of Germanicus* and Gavin Hamilton's *Dead Hector Mourned* but also to Pompeo Batoni's *Stratonice*. Anthony Clark, 'Some Early Subject Pictures by P. G. Batoni', *Burlington Magazine* 101, 675 (June 1959), p. 232.

146 The two works were originally purchased by the Marquis de Veri. After his death in 1785 the works were sold. The next owner was Laneuville who sold them in 1813 to De Villeserre, who sold them in 1820 to the French state. Henceforth they were owned by the Louvre. See Joconde, the online catalogue of art in French museums: http://www.culture.gouv.fr/public/mistral/joconde_fr The above mentioned two sketches for these paintings are now in the collection of the Musée Wicar in Lille.

147 Brookner, 'Jean Baptiste Greuze I', p. 162. Greuze had been member of the Academy since 1755 but had never submitted an official sample of his work to become accepted. When he finally did so, after being threatened with expulsion from the Salon exhibitions – in which only Academy members could exhibit – his historical painting *Sévère et Caracalla* (1769, now at the Louvre) was considered too inferior. Therefore the Academy officially accepted him as member, but only the basis of his previous work and therefore as genre painter. Infuriated, Greuze didn't exhibit at the Salon again for decades.

boring and gray, the abundance of violet and *gorge-de-pigeon*,¹⁴⁸ the indecision of the reds, the filth of the blues, the flabbiness and muddiness in the background, the thickness of the shadows'.¹⁴⁹ Despite the Goncourts's harsh assessment, Greuze experienced a public revaluation that fetched top prices for his works by the end of the nineteenth century.

Greuze fell out of public favour again with the rise of Modernism in the early twentieth century. Classic surveys of art history, such as Ernst Gombrich's *The Story of Art* (originally 1950) left him out. Rosenblum's teacher, the great art historian Walter Friedländer (1873-1966), hardly esteemed Greuze. In his *From David to Delacroix* (1952) he wrote, not without irony: 'Everything is haunted by an effete and washed-out Rococo which, in ridding itself of overt eroticism, has produced a more painful *volupté décente*, a kind of lascivious chastity. Chastity and the related virtues were portrayed with half-nude bosoms and draperies clinging to the body in the manner of the antique. Greuze's innocently voluptuous young maidens are typical examples of this sort of erotic prudery'.¹⁵⁰ In 1956, however, Brookner came out in favour of Greuze in a two-part article in the respectable art history journal, *The Burlington Magazine*: 'The pictures by Greuze shown at the Exhibition of Eighteenth-Century Masters at the Royal Academy, 1954-5, did nothing either to enhance or to diminish the reputation of this maligned artist. [...] Yet our indifference to Greuze is of fairly recent origin'.¹⁵¹ She criticized the easy-going dismissal of him as a mere precursor of David. He had been far more versatile and, she added, one can also reverse the judgement: David had clearly learned from Greuze's work. At the time, however, Brookner was a voice in the wilderness. In 1962 H. W. Janson could still write in *The History of Art*: 'Greuze has neither wit nor satire. His pictorial sermon illustrates the social gospel of Jean-Jacques Rousseau: that the poor, in contrast to the immoral aristocracy, are full of 'natural' virtue and honest sentiment'.¹⁵² An odd assessment since the aristocracy in Greuze's own time were some of his main customers.

Brookner's *Greuze, the rise and fall of an eighteenth-century phenomenon* (1972) and the exhibition, *Jean-Baptiste Greuze, 1725-1805* (1976-1977) in the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut, in the California Palace of the Legion of Honor and the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Dijon spurred the modern reassessment of Greuze's work.¹⁵³ At the same time, museums acquired important pieces and young art historians conducted research on him. At the Frick, curator Edgar Munhall would organize the exhibition *Greuze: A Portraitist for the '90s* in 1996 and, in 2002,

148 An iridescent colour changing from pink to blue, like on a dove's breast.

149 Edmond de Goncourt, 'Greuze', *L'Art du XVIIIe siècle*, Vol. II, Charpentier, 1882, p. 13.
<http://www.educnet.education.fr/louvre/greuzel/default.htm>.

150 Walter Friedländer, *From David to Delacroix* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), p. 9.
English translation of *Von David bis Delacroix* (1932).

151 Brookner, 'Jean Baptiste Greuze I', p. 157.

152 H.W. Janson, *History of Art. A Survey of the Major Visual Arts from the Dawn of History to the Present Day*. Second Edition (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1982), p. 580.

153 Anita Brookner, *Greuze, the rise and fall of an eighteenth-century phenomenon* (London: Elek, 1972).
Edgar Munhall, *Jean-Baptiste Greuze, 1725-1805* (Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum, 1976).

Greuze the Draftsman.¹⁵⁴ One of the first in Italy to write about Greuze's historical and artistic context was Antonio Del Guercio in his *Conflittualità dell'arte moderna* (1976). Nevertheless, as late as 2003, Del Guercio still could write about the moral qualities of Greuze's work: '[He] gives his own contribution to the Enlightenment's critique of the corruption of the aristocratic world, by eulogizing the daily working life of the bourgeoisie and the French people. But the illustrative language and sometimes banal narrative structures unfortunately give this vindictive polemic the tone of an educational and pedagogical sermon'.¹⁵⁵ Del Guercio rather prefers the simple and intimate realism of Chardin as representing the imagination of the pre-revolutionary Third Estate. In *L'oeil interminable* (1989), Jacques Aumont criticizes this distinction between Greuze and Chardin and indicates that both based their representation 'on an identical belief in the authentic appearance of the moment'.¹⁵⁶ Aumont argues that, although it contains no original subject and goes back to the famous Biblical theme of the Prodigal Son, Greuze's painting of *Le fils puni* gives a contemporary and liberal interpretation of the theme.

The novel by Tomasi di Lampedusa and the screenplays

Putting Greuze's painting in Don Fabrizio's study was no invention of Visconti's. In his novel *The Leopard*, Lampedusa had already described it:

He began looking at a picture opposite him, a good copy of Greuze's *Death of the Just Man*; the old man was expiring on his bed amid welters of clean linen, surrounded by afflicted grandsons, and by granddaughters raising arms towards the ceiling. The girls were pretty, and provoking; and the disorder of their clothes suggested sex more than sorrow; they, it was obvious at once, were the real subject of the picture. Even so Don Fabrizio was surprised for a second at Diego always having this melancholy scene before his eyes; then he reassured himself by thinking that the other probably entered that room only once or twice a year.¹⁵⁷

What is remarkable is that Visconti's screenplay appropriated the title that Lampedusa attributed to the painting, which differs from the original one. Lampedusa – and Visconti after him – moved the focus from the son to the dying father. Lampedusa also considered the girls as indecent and continued:

Immediately afterwards he asked himself if his own death would be like that; probably it would, apart from the sheets being less impeccable (he knew that the sheets of those in their death agony are always dirty with spittle, ejections, medicine marks...) and it was hoped that Concetta, Carolina and his other women folk would be more decently clad. As always the thought of his own death

154 At the exhibition, *Greuze the Draftsman* (2002) the two sketches for *La malédiction paternelle* and *Le mauvais fils puni* from 1765 were exhibited as well, just like later sketches and figure studies for the same works. Afterwards the exhibition traveled to the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles. Edgar Munhall, *Greuze the Draftsman* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2003). See also: Emma Barker, *Greuze and the Painting of Sentiment* (Milton Keynes: The Open University, 2005).

155 Antonio Del Guercio, *Storia dell'arte moderna e contemporanea* (Rome: Newton & Compton, 2003), p. 20. See also: Antonio Del Guercio, *Conflittualità dell'arte moderna* (Rome: Editori Riuniti 1976).

156 Aumont 2007, p. 93.

157 Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, *The Leopard*, trans. Archibald Colquhoun (Vintage: London, 2007), pp. 173-4.

calmed him as much as that of others disturbed him: was it perhaps because, when all was said and done, his own death would in the first place mean that of the whole world?¹⁵⁸

In the first draft of the script, Lampedusa's version of Don Fabrizio's intimations of mortality was represented by a *voice over*. Only afterwards would Tancredi and Angelica enter the scene:

Just in front of the Prince is a painting, a good copy of the Death of the Righteous by Granze [sic = Greuze]. The canvas represents the agony of an old man, surrounded by afflicted grandsons and by granddaughters who raise their arms toward the ceiling. Fabrizio: I wonder why Diego would hold such a melancholy scene before him ... But of course. This is the library. Ponteleone is not the kind to waste his time here. He will enter it just once a year.¹⁵⁹

The above screenplay remains close to the novel. In the film, this has turned into a dialogue between three people. The scene has become more intense because of the contrast between the old don who so calmly, lucidly, and seriously talks about his own death and the young, lively couple who are rather put off by the subject. In the first version of the full (uncredited) script, Don Fabrizio's thoughts about death still have a *voiceover*, like in the novel. The painter is referred to as 'Granze' instead of Greuze.¹⁶⁰ Apparently the writer(s) of the first version did not care much for a literal transcription of Greuze's name. From this, we might infer that Visconti's crew did not hold him in high esteem. In later phases the voice over was substituted by dialogue as in the film.¹⁶¹

It seems challenging to project the representation of *Le fils puni* and its counterpart onto the narrative of Visconti's *The Leopard*, especially on the characters of Don Fabrizio and Tancredi. Officially, Tancredi is his nephew, but Don Fabrizio has a closer relationship with him than with his own sons. Visconti underscores this by giving a purely decorative role to the Don's eldest son who, as with Lampedusa, is more conservative than his father and consequently is argumentative with him.

Tancredi's farewell when leaving for the war is hardly consistent with Greuze's *Malédiction paternelle*. Tancredi is not the rake of Greuze's painting who abandons his family. Initially Don Fabrizio disapproves of Tancredi for choosing the *Garibaldini* over the Bourbons. When he realizes the truth of Tancredi's words,

158 Ibid., p. 174.

159 Scenariò Il Gattopardo, C28, 006647, 'Prima Sceneggiatura', Fondo Visconti, Fondazione Gramsci, Rome.

160 Ibid.

161 Scenariò Il Gattopardo, 9-3-1962, C28-006656, Fondo Visconti, Fondazione Gramsci, Rome. In this later version Greuze's name is spelled as 'Grenze' and the voice over is already substituted by dialogue. Visconti did this more often. Also the *monologue intérieur* of Aschenbach's inner dilemma in Thomas Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig* was traded in the film *Death in Venice* (1971) for a dialogue with an alter ego of Aschenbach created *ex novo*: Alfried. For the different phases of the scenario of *Death in Venice*, see a.o. C39-011973 and C39-011982, Fondo Visconti, Fondazione Gramsci, Rome. See also my interview with Nicola Badalucco, 11 May 2004, the MA thesis of my former student Liedewij Theisens, *Balanceren tussen roes en betoegeling. De rol van Nietzsche in Morte a Venezia* (Vrije Universiteit 2004) and her article 'De noodzakelijke dwaalweg. Honderd jaar Visconti: Van *Tod in Venedig* naar *Morte a Venezia*', *Skrien* 38, 10 (December 2006), pp. 14-17. In Visconti's earlier work one encounters voiceovers, as in *Senso* and in *La terra trema*.

however – which recur throughout the book and the film, ‘if we want everything to stay the same, we must ensure that everything changes’ – Don Fabrizio supports him, even with money. Tancredi’s parting is that of the dashing romantic hero, and the music and Delon’s smooth, jovial appearance accentuate this. Nobody tries to hold him back, unlike the people in Greuze’s painting; everyone is waving him off. The only one who regrets his departure is Don Fabrizio’s daughter, Concetta (Lucilla Morlacchi), who is in love with him but is too shy to show it (see Chapter 9 for a discussion on the mobile framing of this scene).

Tancredi’s return from the war is not consistent with *Le fils puni* either. Although he has a head injury, he seems otherwise very healthy. As the film shows, he will take good care of his family because he helps them surmount the obstacles on the way to their retreat in Donnafugata. His family does not accuse him of having abandoned them for the war, because thanks to Tancredi’s assistance, they stay afloat and maintain their social status. Don Fabrizio dies in the novel but not in the film. Yet, at the ball we get hints of impending death, both his and that of his class. The uncleanness of death and human degradation are highlighted by the dozens of chamber pots that Don Fabrizio encounters at the end of the ball, an image that Lampedusa also depicted (see Chapter 10). Visconti deliberately limited the story to the chapters that occur between 1860 and 1863. The two epilogue-like chapters that describe the death of the prince – in a (not grand) hotel bed – and his daughters’ farewell to the past were omitted. But by focusing on Greuze’s *Le fils puni* and other *momento mori* Visconti implies the prince’s end.

Lampedusa and Greuze

Why did Lampedusa select Greuze? Was it because of his love for *litterati* that Lampedusa himself took up the interest in Greuze by the Goncourts and others?¹⁶² In his article, ‘Greuze and Lampedusa’s *Il Gattopardo*’ (1974), Jeffrey Meyers shows that Lampedusa generally liked to refer to art in his work, just as Proust – and we might add, D’Annunzio – did as well.¹⁶³ According to Meyers, Lampedusa used the literary interpretations of Diderot and the Goncourts to place Greuze in an aesthetic and cultural tradition. ‘He incorporates Greuze’s licentious hypocrisy, Diderot’s moral self-deception and the Goncourts’s shrewd insight into the ambivalent character of Fabrizio’.¹⁶⁴ By ambivalence Meyers means that on the one hand the prince identifies with the vanishing noble class for whom the painting of Greuze stands as symbol, yet he also recognizes the inevitability of political revolution and the rise of the bourgeoisie. Meyers notes that both the Bourbons and the

162 Lampedusa wrote his novel between 1954 and 1957, but only after his death (1957) was the book published by Feltrinelli (1958), with a preface by Giorgio Bassani, who also had seen to its publication. One year after the novel was released the American expert on Greuze, Edgar Munhall, defended his dissertation : *Jean-Baptiste Greuze. An Artist and his Critics* (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1959).

163 Jeffrey Meyers, ‘Greuze and Lampedusa’s ‘Il Gattopardo’, *Modern Language Review* 69, 2 (April 1974), p. 308. Andrea Sperelli, protagonist of D’Annunzio’s novel *Il piacere* (Pleasure, 1889), the book Visconti had wanted to film instead of D’Annunzio’s *L’innocente* (The Intruder, 1892), compares his mistresses with Da Vinci’s *Mona Lisa*, the *Danaë* by Correggio and the portrait of Giovanna Tornabuoni by Ghirlandaio. Gabriele D’Annunzio, *Pleasure*, trans. Lara Gochin Raffaelli, London: Penguin, 2013.

164 Meyers 1974, p. 315.



Fig. 12. Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa.

revolutionary tradition taken up by Garibaldi (and Tancredi) originated in France. His article, however, reveals a value judgement about Greuze that resembles that of Friedländer, which makes sense given that it was published before the Greuze exhibitions were organized (although he does mention Brookner).

Lampedusa may have seen *Le fils puni* at the Louvre when he visited Paris in the twenties with his cousin Lucio Piccolo. Between 1920 and 1930 he travelled extensively throughout Europe and visited many museums and cinemas. He was in Paris at least in 1925, 1927, 1928, and possibly more often. In a letter dated 27 July 1925, when he was not yet thirty, and published posthumously in *Viaggio in Europa* (2006), he sums up what he considers worth remembering in his life. Among other things, he recalls seeing the work of Raphael in the Louvre.¹⁶⁵ His artistic interests also shaped his personal interactions during these European voyages. Compare the following words from a letter of 5 July 1927, posted from London. Lampedusa was being hosted by the Marquis of Londonderry and has just declined to play poker because of the high stakes: ‘The Monster [Lampedusa itself] retires, returns to the contemplation of Corot, meditates on the theory of growing poverty: “We are poor, we die poor”’.¹⁶⁶ In an accompanying article in *Viaggio in Europa*, Salvatore Silvano Nigro compares Lampedusa’s portrayal of the characters in *The Leopard* with his ironic depictions in his letters and with John

165 By then, Greuze’s painting was already for over a century part of the Louvre holdings. Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, *Viaggio in Europa. Epistolario 1925-1930* (Milano: Mondadori, 2006), p. 38. The letter was written from Paris. Together with the letter, he added a postcard of an Egyptian statue from the Louvre where he had just been. In August 1927 Lampedusa was briefly back in Paris (*Viaggio in Europa*, pp. 95-6) and again in August 1928 (*ibid.*, pp. 141-3). In 1925 he stayed at the same hotel where Visconti would stay in the 1930s when in Paris: Le Vouillemont, 15, rue Boissy d’Anglas, built in 1830 and not far from Place de la Concorde. Being a big fan of Proust, the Hotel Vouillemont must have been an inspirational location to Visconti, as it is mentioned in Proust’s *Du côté de chez Swann*. In the early twentieth century the exiled queen of Naples, Marie (Maria Sofia), lived here. She also comes back in Proust in *La Captive*. In the 1930s under the management of Robert delle Donne Hotel Vouillemont was the gathering place of intellectual and artistic Europe. Writers and artists like Jean Cocteau, Luigi Pirandello, Robert Desnos, and Francis Picabia stayed there. Visconti was there around 1933-4, according to Gaia Servadio. Gaia Servadio, *Luchino Visconti, a biography* (New York: Franklin & Watts, 1983, orig. George Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1981), p. 48.

166 Lampedusa 2006, p. 54.

Singer Sargent's painted portraits of the Wertheimer family in the Tate Gallery.¹⁶⁷ Lampedusa mercilessly portrayed Sargent's *nouveau riche* bourgeois clients in Dickensian terms. They remind Nigro of the equally villainous portraits of their counterparts in Lampedusa's *The Leopard*: not only Mayor Sedara and his daughter Angelica, but also the hosts of the ball, Don Diego and Donna Margherita, the Turinese government representative Chevalley di Monterzuolo and the accountant of the Salina family, Don Onofrio. Nigro concludes his commentary with a reference to Greuze's painting, noting an important passage that we do not see in the film – the prince's death. 'The Prince himself dies in a room with a low ceiling in a poor hotel, tucked away in a closely housed neighbourhood of Palermo, just as in the bourgeois scene of a moralistic painting by Jean-Baptiste Greuze. The eighteenth-century painting in the Louvre tells in the solemn and scenic manner of a history painter of the lamented death of an old paterfamilias and the late arrival of an 'ungrateful son'. The title of the work is *Le Fils puni*. But the Prince had appropriated the painting as 'The Death of the Righteous'.¹⁶⁸ In Nigro's reading, Lampedusa and his protagonist seem to intermingle, as the author himself has his character make that interpretation.

Lampedusa, moreover, considers the painting by Greuze with irony and distance in the novel. Would he have read Walter Friedländer? His description of the painting is in fact quite close to the art historian's words. Friedländer writes about 'a more painful *volupté décente*, a kind of lascivious chastity', 'chastity and the related virtues portrayed with half-nude bosoms and draperies clinging to the body in the manner of the antique', and 'innocently voluptuous young maidens' as typical examples of 'erotic prudery'. As mentioned above, Lampedusa writes: 'The old man was expiring on his bed amid welters of clean linen, surrounded by afflicted grandsons, and by granddaughters raising arms towards the ceiling. The girls were pretty, and provoking; and the disorder of their clothes suggested sex more than sorrow; they, it was obvious at once, were the real subject of the picture'. Both the art historian and the aristocratic author take seriously neither the subject nor the moral provided by the painter. Lampedusa did not even observe the painting very well, because the women surrounding the old man must be his daughters, not his granddaughters, and none of the bystanders raise their arms to heaven. Lampedusa was an erudite man, who easily read English and promoted British literature in Italy, so he probably knew *From David to Delacroix*. After the Second World War, however, Friedländer was certainly not the only one who was aloof to the moral lessons and the emotional crises depicted in Greuze's work. Meyers, who incidentally does not mention Friedländer in his 1974 article, shares the same conviction. The Goncourts's interpretation contributed to this, for already in the nineteenth century they associated Greuze with *sensibilité* and Rococo – which Brookner argues is incorrect – and accused him of being a man who under the guise of morality follows his baser instincts. Meyers's criticism comes precisely from their reading of Greuze's work.¹⁶⁹

167 Ibid, pp. 90-1.

168 Ibid., p. 31. In the chapter in *The Leopard* on the death of the Prince, the Greuze painting is not mentioned.

169 Cited in Meyers 1974, p. 310.

In his book collection – the remainders of which are now in the Fondo Visconti – Visconti owned a title that may shed further light on the matter: *Les peintres de la vie familiale. Evolution d'un thème* (1945) by Louis Hautecoeur (1884-1973). This art historian was already in his sixties by 1945 but had experienced the turn-of-the-century boom in Greuze and had published a study on the painter in 1913.¹⁷⁰ In his study Hautecoeur focuses on the (especially French) family portrait in painting. When he writes about eighteenth-century interior scenes, he notes that sentimentalism, family-mindedness, and morality prevail: 'When the literature becomes sentimental, family oriented and moral, then the artists in their turn will imitate the writers'.¹⁷¹ In addition to responding to feeling, art must also express morality: 'Art must serve education: it has to be serious and moral. The beautiful and the good, says Diderot, must remain close together. Painting and poetry must be *bene moralae*, it is necessary that they contain morals'.¹⁷² Of all the painters involved in morality and sentiment, Greuze was the most important and the most famous, in Hautecoeur's view: 'After a trip to Italy where he hardly cared for the great works, Greuze continued to be inspired by the Dutch and Chardin'.¹⁷³ But after a series of scenes that expressed such moral values as filial piety, Hautecoeur writes, Greuze recoiled against this in the 1770s. His paintings, *Le fils ingrât* and *Le mauvais fils puni*, showed the opposite view. They were known throughout France thanks their corresponding etchings: 'The picture caused the whole of France to acknowledge his tragic subjects'.¹⁷⁴ So once again, reproduction was highly essential for public recognition.

It is unclear how long Visconti had Hautecoeur's book in his possession and to what extent he followed his considerations when preparing *The Leopard*. What can be asserted is that, after all kinds of variations and deviations, the screenwriters returned to Lampedusa's novel and Visconti literally filmed it – the author's reflections were spoken verbatim through the film's dialogue. We can situate readings of Greuze's painting through this cinematic framework. The ironic distance, however, decreases the emphasis on drama. Burt Lancaster does utter Lampedusa's comment about the scantily clad daughters, but he does not endow the scene with an ironic twist. The scene remains rather charged and only after Angelica's proposal to dance does the sky clear up again.¹⁷⁵

In her book *Moving Pictures* (1991) Anne Hollander cites the art theorist Michael Fried, who pointed out that when you look at Greuze's work – she uses Greuze's *Fils puni* as illustration – you cannot replace yourself in the characters. You therefore gaze at the spectacle in a detached way. In this way, the importance of the moral becomes clear: 'Michael Fried stresses the aim in Greuze's art, as

170 Louis Hautecoeur, *Jean-Baptiste Greuze* (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1913).

171 Louis Hautecoeur, *Les peintres de la vie familiale. Evolution d'un thème* (Paris: Editions de la Galerie Charpentier, 1945), p. 70.

172 *Ibid.*, p. 73.

173 *Ibid.*, p. 74.

174 Hautecoeur himself was, typical for his time, more a fan of Chardin than of Greuze: 'Even in their modest attire, all these women have an air of dignity that distinguishes them from the meat pastries of Boucher and the voluptuous and a bit unkempt women of Greuze'. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

175 Screenwriter Enrico Medioli confirmed that Lampedusa's critical detachment was bigger than Visconti's. Interview with Medioli, 11 January 2008.

Diderot saw it and wanted it, of making the characters ignore or even shut out any possible beholder; and yet they do seem ready, absorbed as they may be, to burst into rhymed soliloquy, or a solitary meditative aria. The intense absorption of these characters, like the venal aims of Hogarth's people, needed in fact to be palpably overdone so as to enthrall an audience, in the ancient stage tradition. The viewer is not encompassed and drawn in as a possible actor, as in Vermeer and in the films, but left staring and transfixed outside at a given distance. He can't escape; and so the moral can't escape him'.¹⁷⁶ This fits with Visconti's film style, certainly in early works like *Ossessione* and *Senso*, where we remain distant from the characters to allow Visconti's moral judgement to infuse us.¹⁷⁷ In short, Visconti and Greuze might have more in common than just the painting in *The Leopard*.

Other paintings in *The Leopard*

Greuze's *Fils puni* is not the only painting that appears in *The Leopard*. There are portraits of Garibaldi (a copy of the one by Salvatore Lo Forte) and Vittorio Emanuele in the modest city hall of Donnafugata. Remarkable too are the dilapidated, old paintings in the palace attic where Tancredi and Angelica roam.¹⁷⁸ Not only do they indicate the location but they also comment on the protagonists. Angelica's wine-red dress, deliberately made a bit old-fashioned to indicate her humble origins, nevertheless stands out when she is placed in front of a large weathered painting of a battle scene.¹⁷⁹ For a moment she seems absorbed in the huge painting, then timidly looks around and calls for Tancredi. Like an ogre he jumps out of a cabinet, startling and amusing his fiancée. The painting depicts a battle of the Crusaders against the Arabs, while on the bridge the captain on horseback raises his sword. Lampedusa described this painting, entitled as *Arturo Corbera at the Siege of Antioch*, as 'an enormous painting propped to the floor' when Angelica hides behind it before being found by Tancredi, who clasps her tight despite her protests.¹⁸⁰ The painting of the film – an artful imitation by Mario Brondi – is clearly a variation on Peter Paul

176 Anne Hollander, *Moving Pictures* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 248-9.

177 One wonders if Hollander doesn't exaggerate a bit by contrasting Greuze with cinema in this way. Films can be either quite observing, or rather privilege subjective viewpoints, for instance by a frequent use of *point-of-view* shots.

178 The scenes in the attic were filmed in the attics of Palazzo Chigi in Ariccia and those of Castello Odescalchi at Bassano di Sutri (now Bassano Romano).

179 Tosi had had great difficulty in finding the right textile and the right colour for this dress: 'It was torture, because I wanted a dress that had a colour that matched Angelica, who had to be simple in shape and perhaps also should have an echo of blood of menstruation. I remember that it was very difficult because there were no saris on the market yet. Nowadays you find Indian saris easily. I eventually found that wine-coloured sari, the colour of a ripe watermelon. It had a light transparency that was common at the Second Empire. It was the fashion of India then, the scarves, the Indian Companies, England ruled the world trade. Inspired by that sari I devised a mustard yellow colour underneath it and so I created the ideal colour. And so it happened, as if it were a painter's palette'. Interview with Tosi, 14 April 2004.

180 *The Leopard* (2007), p. 119. Arturo Corbera was one of the forefathers of Lampedusa himself. The novel *Il Gattopardo* therefore contains many references to Lampedusa's ancestors. The siege of Antioch took place during the First Crusade of 1097-8.



Fig. 13-15. *The Leopard* (Luchino Visconti 1963).

Rubens's *Battle of the Amazons* (1619).¹⁸¹ The old, faded painting is emblematic of the situation: while the former glory of the aristocracy perishes, the freshness and sensuality of Angelica stands out.

While such narratively important paintings such as the Greuze and the *Siege of Antioch* were imitations,¹⁸² Visconti's staff used many originals for the interiors of Don Fabrizio's summer residence at Donnafugata, which were filmed at Palazzo Chigi in Ariccia. Several antique paintings came from this palazzo while others were borrowed from the collection of Domietta Herculani, Princess Del Drago.¹⁸³ Or they were already present on location such as 'Le Belle', the seventeenth-century women's portraits by Jacob Ferdinand Voet, which hang in the Palazzo Chigi.¹⁸⁴ They are visible in Don Fabrizio's office when he discusses the engagement of Tancredi and Angelica with Don Calogero (Paolo Stoppa). This scene was shot in the room where the 'Belle' are still exhibited. Equally visible in the same room are painted maps of Don Fabrizio's estates – Donnafugata is prominently shown because he lives there and the location is discussed in the dialogue. These were newly painted works by Brondi, just like the painting of the Crusaders in the attic scene. The painted decorations in the palaces, such as the ceiling painting in the Villa Boscogrande with the allegory of the Salina house, were also imitations. The Prince proudly shows it to the general of the Garibaldini (Giuliano Gemma), when the latter visits the family with Tancredi and his fellow officer, Count Cavriaghi (Mario Girotti). This decoration was created in just fifteen days, led by the veteran artist, Arnaldo Copelli, who had previously worked on *Senso*.¹⁸⁵

Incidentally, the different screenplays of *The Leopard* indicate that Visconti and his screenwriters initially wanted the paintings and sculpture to have a larger narrative use.¹⁸⁶ At the end of the opening scene, the Prince looks at the ceiling frescoes that feature Olympian gods. He focuses his attention on Vulcan and thinks,

181 Thanks to Guus van den Hout who already alerted me to this resemblance in the mid-1980s. A decade later I discovered that Paolo Bertetto also had noticed the resemblance. Roberto Campari, *Il fantasma del bello. Iconologia del cinema italiano* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1994), p. 61, n. 33. See also Francesco Petrucci, 'Il Gattopardo. I luoghi, tra realtà e trasformazione', in: Petrucci 2001, pp. 50-1. Petrucci also indicates which other paintings are visible in the attic but this is the only painting that features prominently in the film. The other paintings are only fleetingly visible, such as portraits of the French King Henry IV and the Austrian Emperor Leopold I. Oddly enough, portraits of the Spanish kings such as Charles V or Philip II seem to lack, while Spain dominated Sicily for centuries. Austria only ruled Sicily for a few years (1718-34).

182 Moreover, the real Greuze was not necessary, because the novel already speaks about *a copy* of the painting. Petrucci 2001, p. 52, writes that after five or six failed attempts at the Louvre the plan was dropped to use the original and Visconti paid a Roman painter to paint a copy. One wonders why Visconti, who so wanted to be faithful to the book – which only talks of a copy – was not satisfied in advance with one. Petrucci here might have fallen into the error of invoking the popular accounts of Visconti's desire for authenticity.

183 *Ibid.*, p. 48. The puppet theatre visible in the first shot of the scene in the attic also was property of Palazzo Chigi. Instead the portraits used in the attic of Palazzo Odescalchi – the shots in the second part of the scene – rather seem to have been imitations. One man's portrait seems rather a bit out of place, as the style is that of the time of the film, so the 1860s.

184 *Ibid.*, p. 49, 82.

185 *Ibid.*, p. 42. These wall and ceiling decorations are still visible at Villa Boscogrande and the current owner is even advertising them. On the other hand, at close hand the murals are easily recognisable as twentieth-century, especially forty-five years later. Water damage unfortunately has affected the lower half of the wall murals.

186 Scenario *Il Gattopardo*, C28, 006647, 'Prima Sceneggiatura', Fondo Visconti, Fondazione Gramsci, Rome.

‘That Vulcan really looks a bit like Garibaldi, just like in those lithographs that I saw in Turin. (Pause – the prince almost smiles). A cuckold’. After Garibaldi’s victory in Palermo, a scene follows where, in front of Fabrizio and Tancredi, a portrait of the Bourbon King Ferdinando is removed and replaced by a neutral painting of a pond. Tancredi praises Fabrizio’s action: ‘You know what? It is also better. Aesthetic benefits rather than political...’ When Fabrizio watches the frescoes with the gods, together with the general of the Garibaldini, the script contains more dialogue. The General notes: ‘Mars, Jupiter and Venus which glorify the fame of the house. These frescoes are almost a prophecy. I know that you, Excellency, are a great astronomer!’ Fabrizio replies: ‘It is not so much the public acknowledgments that have encouraged me to study the stars as rather the private joys’.

Portraits of Garibaldi and Vittorio Emanuele are hung in the office of Mayor Calogero during the referendum scene. Fabrizio looks at the portraits and thinks, ‘Garibaldi is a nice guy, but the new king is really ugly, the poor man’. However, both are twinned by their luxuriant moustaches, hair, and beards. When Tancredi and Angelica roam in the attics, they come to a secret room where excited naked figures carved in marble are visible on the chimneys, though having been partially chipped away by a hammer; the sculpture points at eroticism. This refers to the sadomasochist symbolic character of the room which is apparent in the novel but not in the film. Also the bundle with small whips and other S/M devices that Tancredi discovers in a closet is not in the film but was in the novel *and* in the script.¹⁸⁷ Here the scene indicates that Angelica is excited by violence and cruelty. Finally, the script retains from the novel the observation that Tancredi has taught Angelica how to move within high society. At the ball, Angelica, Tancredi and the daughter of the house stand in front of a large tapestry and a painting by Carlo Dolci. Angelica makes a comment about the carpet that shows her cultural education. The daughter stops in front of a painting, ‘This is Dolci. It is the most popular painting of my father’, to which Angelica responds, ‘Your father is right. It really is a beautiful painting. It reminds me of the Madonna of the Grand Duke. Maybe that one has still more melancholy expressed in it, don’t you think so?’ The daughter is instantly impressed by Angelica’s cultural competency and assuredness: ‘Why so formal? Let us be on a first-name basis’.

The use of reproductions was common in Visconti’s films. The heat from the film lights posed too much risk for real paintings, and loans from museums were either cost prohibitive or were simply not allowed. So the paintings in *The Damned* were imitations as were those in *Conversation Piece* (see Chapter 3), only the paintings in *L’innocente* were real. According to Mario Garbuglia, ‘The portrait à la Guido Reni that you see in *L’innocente* in the nursery was a real painting. We found it thanks to a big antique dealer. He went to London with me where we bought that painting. Everything authentic in this film we collected through antique dealers, who worked for us, to great satisfaction’.¹⁸⁸ In addition, paintings

187 According to Suso Cecchi D’Amico, this passage was not eliminated because of (self-) censorship, but because otherwise too much had to be explained. Interview with Suso Cecchi D’Amico, 11 May 2004. Enrico Medioli instead admitted that such a topic would have been a bridge too far for the former public, so they left it out. Interview with Medioli, 11 January 2008.

188 Interview with Mario Garbuglia, 3 May 2004.

and frescoes were often used that were present at the filming locations, not just the 'Belle' by Voet for *The Leopard* but also the sixteenth-century frescoes in Villa Godi Malinverni in *Senso* and the predominantly seventeenth-century landscape scenes of Gaspar Dughet and the Bamboccianti in the Sala dei Paesaggi at Palazzo Colonna in *L'innocente* (the location of the aristocratic concerts). While the frescoes were explicitly used in *Senso*, by placing the actors alongside the painted figures, in *L'innocente* and *The Leopard* the art is hardly visible on the walls, apart from the aforementioned exceptions. In *Conversation Piece*, by contrast, the paintings on the wall are clearly visible and also play an important part in the narrative. Some works even play a key role.

Archaeology of the Set (II): The Conversation Pieces in *Conversation Piece*

One painting was the point of departure for Visconti's penultimate film, *Conversation Piece* (1974). The painting, *Portrait of a Family in a Forest*, is a seventeenth-century Flemish family portrait by the Brussels painters Gillis van Tilborgh and Jacques d'Arthois, though it had been previously identified as a Bartholomeus van der Helst and later as a Gonzales Coques. A large family sits quietly together in the forest, and we observe some degree of mutual contact even though they are clearly posing. This large canvas is in the possession of one of Visconti's regular screenwriters, Enrico Medioli.¹⁸⁹ When Visconti had only partially recovered from the severe stroke that had half paralyzed him in 1972, he urged his collaborators, including Medioli, to come up with new projects. Medioli drafted a script about someone who lives in splendid isolation collecting paintings until he is cruelly confronted by the outside world. Plans for film adaptations of Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg* (*The Magic Mountain*, 1924) and of his *Der Erwählte* (*The Holy Sinner*, 1951) proved too big and costly – the latter book would have required the reconstruction of the sixth-century Rome of Gregory the Great – but Medioli managed to borrow thematic elements from Mann for *Conversation Piece*.

According to Medioli, 'The will to tackle certain themes, to enter into certain conflicts, to ask certain questions. The choice of the order, the dreaded but also desired eruption of the irrational, the death that disguises itself as love, as life ... So gradually the professor took possession of his apartment in the company of his faithful governess Erminia, and he decorated it according to his taste: beautiful objects, books that overflowed from the bookshelves onto the carpets, crowding out the sofas and armchairs. And the *conversation pieces* on the walls, that repeated, varying picture of that never-successfully obtained family, or one that he had always refused, appears throughout the house'.¹⁹⁰ The story concerns an elderly professor (Burt Lancaster), who has rejected life and has retired into the contemplation of his art collection. Despite his being settled, a Pandora's box, like a series of time bombs, is placed in his house. The bombs go off regularly, sometimes literally, sometimes figuratively, in the form of family aggression – the marchioness Bianca

189 In 1999 *Portrait of a family in a forest* (c. 1660) was identified by Christina Wansink (RKD) as a work by Gillis van Tilborgh and Jacques d'Arthois. In the same year the portrait was auctioned at Sotheby's in London but was not sold. Interview with Medioli, 11 January 2008. See also: <http://www.rkd.nl/rkddb/>.

190 Enrico Medioli, 'Come Aschenbach è caduto in un inganno', in: Giorgio Treves ed., *Gruppo di famiglia in un interno di Luchino Visconti* (Bologna: Cappelli 1975), p. 12.

Brumonti (Silvana Mangano), her daughter Lietta (Claudia Marsani), Lietta's fiancé Stefano (Stefano Patrizi) and Bianca's lover Konrad (Helmut Berger). They invade his domain and behave disrespectfully, hysterically, immorally, and violently. The violence is not only local. *Conversation Piece* is both one of the first and few films that, if somewhat discreetly, interrogated the right-wing violence of the 1970s, known as the Years of Lead (*anni di piombo*). The film's theme was, thus, perceived as an admission about the impotence of art in the modern world: anything of cultural value is defenceless. As Medioli averred, 'That comment was poorly received at the time, but it turned out to be correct. Life imitates art'.¹⁹¹

The film's title, *Conversation Piece*, *Gruppo di famiglia in un interno* in Italian, refers to a type of painting that was particularly popular in Great Britain at the end of the eighteenth century, but the term is also widely applied to European family portraits from the seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries. Mario Praz (1896-1982), author of the standard work, *Conversation Pieces* (1971), defines *conversation pieces* as a genre with four main features. 'First, two or more identifiable people, or at least persons appearing as themselves and not as types or fictitious characters [...] Second, a background which describes the habitat of the family or group [...] Third, action: a gesture signifying conversation or communication of some kind from at least a few of the components of the group. Fourth, privacy (i.e., not a public or official function)'.¹⁹²

Both in the film's setting as well as in its narrative, the *conversation pieces* play a key role. The home of the main character is full of these paintings. Along with showing his taste and hobbies, the paintings also point to his past and character: his failed marriage, his dislike of science in the service of the arms race, and his loneliness due to his inability to interact with others. The paintings show ideal families with cheerful, albeit at times stiffly portrayed, children, placed in their own environment and surrounded by familiar objects in living rooms or in gardens. While calmly conversing, playing music, drinking tea or playing games, these painted figures contrast sharply with the family that the professor has never known and will never experience. At the end of the film, Konrad, in whom the professor hopes to find a son, tells him, 'Professor, stay with your paintings, they won't harm you'. Indeed, the decor of his house is the opposite of one in which people really live. Everything is organized, every object has its proper place, just as the paintings hang in deliberate and symmetrical positions, as befits a connoisseur. The *conversation pieces* in the professor's home contrast with and are therefore the anti-symbol of the family who overtakes him in his ivory tower and who, despite his initial reluctance, he vainly attempts to make his own.

191 Interview with Medioli, 11 January 2008. Incidentally, critics and former employees such as Pietro Notarianni were quite shocked that Visconti had started to collaborate with a presumed right-wing production company: Rusconi Film. Francesco Petrucci, 'La realizzazione de "Il Gattopardo"; un'intervista a Pietro Notarianni', in Petrucci 2001, p. 35. However, there was little choice. Because of Visconti's disease, the producers dared not to produce his films, so on the request of Suso Cecchi D'Amico, Burt Lancaster put himself forward as a guarantee for the financing of the film. If Visconti would die during the preproduction or production, Lancaster would take over direction. Beatrice Marconi, 'La sceneggiatura del Gattopardo. Gli altri film con Luchino Visconti. Colloquio con Suso Cecchi D'Amico', in: Petrucci 2001, p. 161.

192 Mario Praz, *Conversation Pieces. A Survey of the Informal Group Portrait in Europe and America* (London: Methuen, 1971), English version of *Scene di conversazione. Conversation pieces* (Roma: Ugo Bozzi Editore, 1971), p. 34.



Fig. 16. *Conversation Piece* (Luchino Visconti 1974).

The painting of the exchange and the art in the library

The painting that this intrusive family offers in exchange for a lease on the top floor of his house portrays *John, Fourteenth Lord Willoughby de Broke and his Family* (1766), and is by Johann Zoffany (1734/5-1810), a German painter who was active mainly in England.¹⁹³ This exchange begins the story and the professor's eventual misery as well. In *Conversation Pieces*, Praz writes that the painting is a typical example of the popularity of tea drinking in eighteenth-century Britain. 'Johann Zoffany painted Lord Willoughby de Broke and his family taking tea in the breakfast room at Compton Verney (the silver tea urn is still in the family's possession). The pyramidal composition of the group (the right section is particularly emphasized by the inclined posture of the father and the child pulling the red wooden horse) and the gestures of the children are typical of 'conversations', as we have had occasion to remark several times, but the painting, like all of Zoffany's, charms by its neatness and elegance'.¹⁹⁴

Later in the film we see the painting on the wall, as in the scene when the professor and Stefano walk into the hall where it hangs in the passage from the library. Left of the same passage hangs (a copy of) the painting by Gonzales Coques, *The Verbiest Family*.¹⁹⁵ Above it even a painting from Praz's own collection is visible, *The Roze Family* (1816-1817) by Margu erite G erard.¹⁹⁶ Praz had this painting prominently printed in colour in his book, and it still is exhibited in his house that has now become a museum.¹⁹⁷ On the wall to the right of the library door hangs Jordanus Hoorn's *The Family of the Painter's Parents* (1775).¹⁹⁸ The

193 Praz 1971, p. 102, ill. 64. Praz mentions the painting as *Lord Willoughby de Broke and His Family*. The painting then was still in the family's possession, as Praz indicates 'Woodley House, Kineton, collection of Lord Willoughby de Broke'. It is now in the collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles.

194 Ibid., p. 104.

195 Ibid., p. 113, ill. 74.

196 Ibid., p. 81, ill. 40.

197 The Museo Mario Praz, which is not the original location on which Visconti and his art director, Mario Garbuglia, based the film. See n. 25.

198 Praz 1971, p. 67, ill. 28.



Fig. 17. *Conversation Piece* (Luchino Visconti 1974).

painting of the exchange, Zoffany's *Lord Willoughby de Broke and his Family*, is hung underneath.

A painting recurs repeatedly in the library scenes, standing out because it is placed on an easel. Not once does it come into focus, making it impossible to identify even with the help of Praz's book. It looks like a nineteenth-century artwork. A woman is seen in profile, seated at a table in the middle of the canvas, looking to the right. To her right, a man serves her, while further right there seems to be a soldier, while several other men stand to her left. Behind the woman we can see an oval niche that presumably holds a statue.

This lack of identification also holds for the many sculptures that appear in the film. Nude or semi-nude male figures stand out. We see four male nudes in the library, the heart of the professor's home and the access to his secret chambers. On his desk stands a shiny black marble statue of a nude man lifting up his arms, a copy of the classical Hellenistic statue of the *Praying Boy*, now at the Staatliche Museen in Berlin. We notice on another table another shiny, though now brownish, bronze classical nude – a copy of the *Cincinnatus*, or *Hermes Fastening His Sandal*, now at the Louvre.¹⁹⁹ On the low table an 18th or 19th century, miniature copy of the classic *Sleeping Hermaphroditus* is visible.²⁰⁰ At the entrance to his secret apartment, there is a large sculpture of Bacchus-like dancing man with a lute-like stringed instrument; apart from a loincloth, he is also naked. Elsewhere in the back of the library stands a statue of Hercules with club and lion's skin, possibly a 17th or 18th century copy after a classic Roman sculpture. These sculptures provide subtle clues about their owner's identity. Thus, we notice the professor gazing at Konrad when the latter is showering in the secret rooms. We might reinforce this reading in the small nineteenth-century painting of a semi-nude boxer that hangs in the secret room. Whereas the paintings represent chaste, decently dressed families – and this is explicitly referenced in the

199 *Cincinnatus* or *Hermes Fastening His Sandal* is an early Imperial Roman marble copy of a Lysippan bronze, dating 4th century B.C. It is in the permanent collection of the Louvre. I thank Frits Scholten for helping to identify the statues mentioned.

200 The mattress underneath the original statue was later made by Bernini. The statue once belonged to Cardinal Borghese but is now at the Louvre. Two antique versions are at the Galleria Borghese and Palazzo Massimo, both in Rome, while other copies are at the Uffizi, the Vatican Museum, and that Hermitage. Many copies were also made during the Renaissance.

film, both in dialogue and in the pan along the walls of the library at the film's climax – the sculptures give the opposite signal of repressed male homosexuality. While the film constantly refers to painting, sculpture also has a very prominent place in the decor and in the framing of the shots, adding a subdued new layer distinct from the performances and the dialogue. In other words, while the paintings project an image of family life that the professor wants to uphold, the sculptures reveal his inner self.

The presumed Arthur Devis

In the living room – the rather small room where the professor keeps his telephone and turntable – the largest artwork on display is *The Family of Sir James Hunter Blair, First Baronet* (1785) by the Scottish painter, David Allan (1744-1796).²⁰¹ We see a father, mother and their boisterous offspring in or next to a cart against the backdrop of a romantic landscape. Praz writes, 'In David Allan's *Family of Sir James Hunter Blair* (1785) we see the vast landscape of Blairquhan serving as a background to a kind of anthology of children's attitudes, as Waterhouse remarks, and in particular the motif of the go-cart, which we shall find many more times'.²⁰² Ironically Konrad recognizes the painting as a work of the contemporary *conversation piece* and portrait painter, Arthur Devis (1712-1787), whose work in Praz's book is extensively discussed and illustrated. When Konrad recognises it as a Devis, the Professor nods: Yeah, could be. Konrad, who studied a little art history in Germany, recognizes it because a friend of his has hung a similar painting next to his phone.

After Konrad takes a photo of his friend's painting to show the similarity to the professor's, the older man begins to appreciate him. The similarity resides, however, in an identical temple and tree that Visconti's copyist put in both paintings and which do not appear in the Allan and Zoffany originals. It is also curious that Devis's temple recurs in none of the illustrations in Praz's book. In its shape, the little temple is reminiscent of both Shakespeare's Temple in Richmond, near London, and the two versions of its representation by Johan Zoffany, *Mr. and Mrs. Garrick at Shakespeare's Temple at Hampton* (c. 1762).²⁰³ Also left out of the copy of the professor's alleged Devis are two child figures on the left, so that now the parents are standing against the left edge of the frame. On the right, besides the temple, a large tree, a statue, shrubs, and a cottage were inserted. This gives the painting a more romantic setting and blocks the view of the family villa, originally visible in the background. The picture Konrad shows is printed in Praz's *Conversation Pieces* on the same page as Allan's canvas and is not a Devis, but a work most likely by

201 Ibid., p. 142, ill. 103. Until 2011 the painting stayed with the family. It was sold that year during a sales exhibition to a private owner, who provided it as long-lasting loan to the National Gallery of Scotland in Edinburgh. *Five Centuries of Scottish Portraiture* (30 July – 15 September 2011), Bourne Fine Art, Edinburgh. <http://www.bournefineart.com/media/publications/pdf/1253/BFA%20Five%20Hundred%20Years%204.pdf>.

202 Ibid., p. 143. Praz might have been mistaken here. Until 2012 Blairquhan was the estate of the Blair family in South Ayrshire, Scotland, but it was bought after James Hunter Blair's death. Depicted in the background of the painting is his country house Dunskey House in the district of Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland.

203 Ibid, p. 249, ill. 275 and 276. Praz does not date the paintings.



Fig. 18-19. *Conversation Piece* (Luchino Visconti 1974).



Fig. 20 (left). David Allan, *Sir James Hunter Blair, 1st Bart., with his Wife and Nine of their Fourteen Children* (1785). National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh. Fig. 21 (right). Johann Zoffany, *The Drummond Family at Cadland* (c. 1782). Lost in 1940.

Zoffany, *The Drummond Family at Cadland* (c. 1782).²⁰⁴ Again, a temple and a big tree are inserted into the image and the greenery obstructs the background, turning Zoffany's seascape into a landscape. In short, we are dealing with a process of reworking reality, of adapting it to the situation. An intimate bond needs to be developed between the quiet, retired bourgeois professor, and the arrogant, melodramatic and flamboyant Konrad; one is created through connoisseurship. And so two works by Allan and Zoffany are re-edited to create a hybrid, under the common denominator of a single author whose name, 'Arthur Devis', is a pseudonym.

Other paintings, other rooms

To the right of the alleged Arthur Devis in the living room hangs another painting featuring children and a rocking horse. It is *Sir Reresby Sitwell, with his brother and sister* (c.1828) by Octavius Oakley (1800-1867).²⁰⁵ In the film, the professor comments that he moved the Sitwell portrait out of his bedroom because he found it to be too intimate. Visconti does not show the painting during this scene, but later, when Konrad and the professor are standing in front of the alleged Devis, we get a glimpse of it.

Even the professor's bedroom is full of paintings. Right next to his bed, we see Zoffany's *A Family Party – The Minuet* (1780-1783), prominently depicted in Praz's book but only fleetingly visible in the film, in the scene when he is awoken by the brawl.²⁰⁶ During the two dinner party scenes when we see a variety of eighteenth-century conversation pieces on the dining room wall, the room is filmed from an angle that does not permit us to see them very well. In any case, the dining room with its Rococo style, bright colours, and delicate chairs, gives a feminine impression that contrasts sharply with the dark, rather massive library. The figures depicting in the dining room paintings are mostly recognisable as women, especially the large painting on the left frame that is reminiscent of French *fêtes galantes* à la Watteau and Lancret.

Near the end of the film, after a family dinner is disturbed again in a classic Visconti-like manner (in Visconti's world, family means security but also a source of conflict, preferably expressed at the table), the argument continues in the library where Stefano and Konrad start a fight only to be interrupted by the professor. The professor regrets his failure to make peace with this new surrogate family, and he

204 Ibid, p. 142, ill. 104. At the time, Praz indicated the work as earlier attributed to Zoffany. He didn't give a date for the painting and its location was unknown. In the meantime we know the painting must have been made c. 1782 and was probably destroyed during the London Blitz of 1940. The attribution to Zoffany is still unsure, even if it was presented as such at its auction at Christie's in 1924. Frick Photoarchive Items. Call no. Zoffany 224-1n. Permanent link: <http://arcade.nyarc.org:80/record=b1078779-S6>. Letters of Mrs. Alden O'Brien to the Frick Art Reference Library, dated June 13, 1992, and December 4, 1992.

205 Ibid, p. 153, ill. 116. In Praz's book some paintings of the Sitwells are depicted: not only the aforementioned portrait by Oakley but also *Sir George Sitwell and his family* (c.1828) by John Partridge. See *ibid.*, p. 240, ill. 236. The name Sitwell may have been used as homage. Praz wrote his book in response to the first important study on the genre, Sacheverell Sitwell, *Conversation Pieces: A Survey of English Domestic Portraits and Their Painters* (London: Batsford, 1936).

206 Ibid., p. 191, ill. 152.

muses about his collection and the approach of Death who, as his last subtenant, is hovering over his head. The camera then pans along the paintings on the library's upper wall. When the camera stops, time appears to have elapsed: it is now day and the professor is – literally and figuratively – on his own, standing at the window, looking outside. It is a beautiful moment, a farewell to both the real family and the painted families. On the basis of Praz's *Conversation Pieces*, several paintings in this long pan can be identified. The first two we see are Johann Christian Mannlich's *Marianne Camasse, Comtesse de Forbach with Two of Her Children* 1764),²⁰⁷ and Gérard's *The Roze Family* (1816-1817). Then follows a long series of family portraits: *Portrait of Family in a Forest* by van Tilborgh, *Family Portrait in a Garden* (c. 1630) by Jacob Jordaens,²⁰⁸ *The Graham Children* (1742) by William Hogarth [not shown in Praz's book], then a Watteau-like representation of partially dressed figures in a garden, a second unidentified group performance in a garden, then a likely British eighteenth-century portrait of two men and a woman, followed by a Dutch conversation piece of *The Family of Jeronimus de Bosch* (1754) by Tibout Regters, *The Strode Family* (1738) by Hogarth, *The Second Duke and Duchess of Richmond Watching Horses Exercising* (c. 1761-1762) by George Stubbs, and *The Drummond Family* (c. 1769) by Zoffany.²⁰⁹ The pan ends with Hogarth's double portrait of *Mr. And Mrs. Garrick* (1757).²¹⁰

Praz versus Visconti

Besides Sacheverell Sitwell's classic study, *Conversation Pieces* (1936), Praz relied on works like Ralph Edwards's *Early Conversation Pictures* (1954), Hanna-Kronberger Frentzen's *Das deutsche Familienbildnis (German Family Self-Portraits)*, 1940), A. Staring's *De Hollanders Thuis (The Dutch at Home)*, 1956), and finally Louis Hautecoeur's *Les peintres de la vie familiale (The Painters of Family Life)*, 1945). As mentioned earlier (see Chapter 2, also 5), Visconti had Hautecoeur's book in his library.²¹¹ In 1945 Galerie Charpentier edited *Les peintres de la vie familiale*. Did this famous Parisian gallery stand as a model for the film's Parisian gallery, Blanchard, who offers the professor the Zoffany portrait? The film makes a rather negative comment about the gallery as they charge him higher prices because of his specialisation. Understandably, then, the real gallery to which Visconti was referring was left unstated. Was Praz himself – or Visconti – aware of manipulation by his suppliers? Visconti was an avid collector himself who frequently purchased from galleries. Yet, he was not a collector in the same way as is the professor, trying to fill in gaps in his art collection, focusing on only one certain style, genre, and era. Visconti instead had an eclectic taste, with a focus on nineteenth century and

207 Ibid, p. 218, ill. 177.

208 Ibid, p. 115, ill. 76.

209 Ibid., respectively, p. 214, ill. 174; p. 101, ill. 63; p. 188, ill. 149; p. 126, ill. 86.

210 Ibid, p. 259, ill. 316. In the later eighteenth century David Garrick was one of the most famous British actors, who introduced restraint and realism into theatrical performance. Moreover he managed for years the London Drury Lane theatre. James Whale made the film about him, *The Great Garrick* (1937).

211 The book is still part of the Fondo Visconti. Praz notes he looked particularly to Edwards. Praz (1971), p. 9.

early twentieth century art, antiques from various centuries, some modern art (e.g. fishermen scenes by Guttuso, ceramics of Picasso), but also a constantly changing collection of *objets d'art*, for which the quantity (seriality) was the surplus value. Visconti bought art and antiques all his life, with which he filled his villas in Rome and Ischia. Sculpture was an important part of his collection, according to a 1961 article by Hélène Demoriane in *Connaissance des Arts*.²¹² A visual impression of Visconti's villa on Ischia, La Colombaia, was provided in the photo book *il documento di Visconti* (1982) by the Japanese photographer Kishin Shinoyama.²¹³

According to Mario Garbuglia, Enrico Medioli and other former employees of Visconti, *Conversation Piece* was neither autobiographical nor a portrait of Praz.²¹⁴ However, the professor possesses traits of both Praz and Visconti. Praz lived his last years apart from the world in a house full of antiques and art, mainly in Empire style, whereas the interior of the professor's house is more Roman Baroque. The film's credits acknowledge the debt owed to Praz's *Conversation Pieces*. In many of his books Praz depicted examples from his own collection, thus it is quite possible that still more work from this collection was copied for the film, even if only the Gérard painting is clearly recognisable in the background of certain scenes.²¹⁵ According to Alessandro Bencivenni there are similarities between Praz and the professor. Praz had the same longing for the past and dislike of contemporary society. In a re-edition of his book, *La casa della vita (The House of Life)*, (1979) Praz recounted an event in his life that had similarities to the film: 'The film is respectful of my double, and perhaps exaggerates with regard to the subtenants, of whom I can say only, when I was asked by the most notorious of them to sign my book, I wrote: "Per (followed by the name), vicino di casa, lontano d'idee [For ... close

212 Hélène Demoriane, 'Luchino Visconti et ses acquisitions pléthoriques', *Connaissance des Arts* 113 (July 1961), pp. 76-81. This shows that Visconti was fond of collecting in series such as bronze bulls, copper braising, small obelisks and garden statues. One year one object was in demand, the next year something else. Visconti's predilection for sculptures was remarkable according to Demoriane. She relates this to the Bridge of the Sirens (Ponte delle Sirenette) in Milan in *Rocco and His Brothers* (which was released one year before her article). Visconti inherited the villa of his father and settled there during the war years. After his 1972 seizure Visconti sold the villa and had almost all his household goods moved to his new villa in Castel Gandolfo. It seems to be that both during the transport and after Visconti's death parts of his holdings were stolen. The remainder of the art collection was either auctioned or divided among the family. Fondo Visconti, MFV1-015508- 015517, holds several – undated – photos of the interior and exterior of Visconti's villa at Via Salaria 366.

213 Kishin Shinoyama, *Il documento di Visconti/Visconti no Iko* (Tokyo: Shogakkan, Showa 57 (1982/2007)). When Shinoyama photographed in the villa, a lot of furniture was still available, especially many Art Nouveau objects which had filled it. When I visited the villa in 2006, most of it was gone, but still photographs of these objects 'dressed up' the villa a bit. Shortly thereafter the villa closed completely and fell into disrepair, after having been open as a kind of study centre under the management of Ugo Vuoso. In August 2011, the villa and the garden reopened after a thorough restoration. Since 2003 Visconti himself, along with his sister Uberta, has been interred in the villa's garden.

214 Interview with Mario Garbuglia, 16 October 1984. Enrico Medioli, 1975, p. 14. From 1934 Mario Praz lived at Palazzo Ricci in Via Giulia in Rome. On that site Visconti and Mario Garbuglia based the decor of the apartment for the professor's house. In 1969 Praz moved to Palazzo Primoli where he would die thirteen years later and where the current Museo Casa Praz is located. For more about Praz and his collection, see Stefano Susinno, 'Mario Praz, collezionista', in Stefano Susinno, Elena di Majo eds., *Le Stanze della Memoria. Vedute di ambienti, ritratti in interni e scene di conversazione dalla collezione Praz. Dipinti e acquarelli, 1776-1870*. Milano/Roma: Arnoldo Mondadori/De Luca, 1988, pp. 11-17.

215 Interview with Stefano Susinno (then Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Rome), 1984. Interview with Mario Garbuglia, 3 May 2004.

as a neighbour, but far from my ideas.]” This observation could have been from the professor himself, Bencivenni writes. He continues to analyse the relationship between Praz and Visconti: ‘But the biggest element of affinity between Visconti and Praz’s book is the sensitivity of both in relation to the attitudes, that view of life itself as a theatre, which is so characteristic of the conversation pieces. It expresses the false consciousness of a class, who liked to pose, in the illusion of guaranteeing “security” and “stability”. The defeat of that illusion and the unmasking of that false consciousness determine the theme of the film’.²¹⁶

The *conversation pieces* also speak of themselves when they are not in the frame, as in the flashbacks with the professor’s mother (Dominique Sanda) who, upon returning from a trip, looks slightly ironic in her *direct address* to him. The library is now a living room with light, soft pastel shades. Only the bookcase is clearly recognisable from the other decor. The antique paintings are conspicuously absent though there are small family portraits on a low table. The mother figure was inspired by a pastel portrait of Donna Carla Erba, Visconti’s mother, painted by the society painter, Antonio Argnani (1868-1947).²¹⁷ Her blonde curly locks especially stand out.²¹⁸ In the flashback scenes we also see another lady’s portrait in the background, somewhat in the style of Argnani but more frivolous. It hangs curiously in the first flashback with the parent to the right of the door, and in the second flashback to the left, by the window (see also Chapter 4). Giorgio Treves, writing about Argnani and his portrait of Carla Erba states that, ‘The painter Antonio Arg[n]ani, who between the end of the last and the beginning of this century lived in Paris for a long time, acquired a large reputation there and became a painter “à la mode”; he made some portraits of the Viscontis. He portrayed Luchino’s mother in a lovely attitude of calmness – those deep grey eyes, which seem to aim nowhere, are lost in distant meditations. He accentuated a feeling of peace and serenity. In addition to imperceptible nuances, the colour ranges from Boldinian white on the shoulders and chest, which mingles with the [white of] a

216 Alessandro Bencivenni, *Luchino Visconti* (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1983), pp. 90-2.

217 Argnani, whose name is also written as Arquani and Argani, was born in Faenza. Early in the twentieth century he was active in France and was especially known for his pastels of the crowned heads of (Eastern) Europe and the artists and literati of the Belle Epoque such as Lyda Borelli, Gaby Deslys, Jean Cocteau and Lucien Muratore. <http://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/fotografie/fondi/SER-2j010-0000008/>.

218 According to Vera Marzot, this portrait is visible also at the end of the film, in the professor’s bedroom, as he is dying, but on the DVD of the film (Arrow Films / Freemantle Home Entertainment, 2003), the painting cannot be seen. Interview with Marzot, 11 May 2004. Visconti always had a copy of the original in his house. The Visconti family could not tell if the original still exists. Interview with Luchino Gastel, 12 July 2004. For an image of the pastel, see the picture by Karen Radkay of Visconti and his sister Uberta with the pastel in the background, in Caterina D’Amico de Carvalho, *Album Visconti* (Milano: Sonzogno, 1978), p. 139. The copy is also shown as part of Visconti’s Villa Colombaia at Ischia in Shinoyama’s *Il documento di Visconti*. In her biography of Visconti Monica Stirling asserts that the pastel by Argnani can be seen in the flashback with the mother, along with a Morandi and Scipione. None of them, however, can be seen in the DVD of the film; at most, they can be seen on film stills that show more of the decor. Stirling (1982), p. 273. Stefania Severi mentions a Morandi-like painting, painted by set designer Mario Garbuglia himself, which would be visible in the same death scene, but that too is not visible on the DVD. Severi 2001, p. 94-5.



Fig. 22. *Conversation Piece* (Luchino Visconti 1974).

pearl necklace, with the more Titian-like tones of the hair, erratically distributed on the forehead'.²¹⁹

The paintings in the apartment on the upper floor, rented by the Brumontis for Bianca's lover, Konrad, are interesting as well. The interior of this apartment contrasts with the professor's Baroque, ornate house with all his books, paintings, and art objects. We can see a white leather sofa, sleek glass cabinets, curtains with showy designs and a lamp in the shape of a silver palm. It is modern design of the seventies: clean, tight, full of bright colours, lots of glass, metal, and leather. Costume designer Vera Marzot explained, 'It is not so clear here whether this was intentional, because it was an ugly style. A rather harsh judgment on the new culture that he didn't share'.²²⁰ Two paintings stand out. One is possibly inspired by the abstract paintings of Domietta Hercolani – gaudy, with a red and a green 'sun', and a large orange butterfly. The other is an abstract work in the style of Mark Rothko, characterized by a dark green or grey base colour with a pale red horizontal bar in the middle of the canvas. During an interview with art director Mario Garbuglia in the 1980s, he said that it was inspired by Claudia Cardinale's collection of American painters.²²¹ In a later interview (2004) he retracted his earlier account, 'I've never been at Cardinale's home. I told Luchino, "I will use American painters as my models". At the time, they were very well known, I do not know if that still applies'.²²²

In comparison to Visconti and Garbuglia's use of modern art in their sets, Michael Walker in *Hitchcock's Motifs* (2005) examined the director's use of modern art. The general attitude toward modern art in American film of the forties was hostile. In Hitchcock, however, that attitude was more ambivalent. On the one hand, there were the surreal dream sequences by Dalí in *Spellbound* (1945), the modern artist as hero in *The Trouble with Harry* (1955) and the art on the wall at André and Juanita's in *Topaz* (1969). On the other hand suspicious or malevolent

219 Treves (1975), p. 126. He refers to the painter Giorgio Boldini, who developed a colourful, sketchy style for his many portraits of the French elite of the Belle Epoque. Cf. Giovanni Boldini, *Donna Franca Florio* (1900), *Princess Maria Eulalia of Spain* (1898) and *Princess Marthe-Lucile Bibesco* (1911).

220 Interview with Vera Marzot, 11 May 2004.

221 Interview with Mario Garbuglia, 30 October 1984.

222 Interview with Mario Garbuglia, 3 May 2004.

figures have modern art hanging on their walls, like the killers in *Rope* (1948) and Jonathan in *Stage Fright* (1950).²²³ This anti-avant-garde tendency also exists in Italian cinema. The interior of the house governed by the sadistic libertines in Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Salò* (1975) is full of modern, futuristic art and in his *Teorema* (1968) the son of the main character is a frustrated artist.²²⁴ In Federico Fellini's *La dolce vita* (1960) a still life by Giorgio Morandi, which hangs in the living room of Steiner (Alain Cuny), Marcello's intellectual friend, is occasionally noticeable. For Marcello (Marcello Mastroianni), the painting expresses the alleged peace and balance of Steiner's life, set against his own empty, hectic existence. Steiner warns Marcello then that this distinction is only superficial. When Marcello later returns the apartment after Steiner has committed suicide and has killed his children, the painting comes back in view with a sinister aspect, as if it had always been a death symbol as rigid as Steiner's corpse. While Fellini's attitude is more ambiguous than that of Pasolini, it can also be generally interpreted as negative.²²⁵ Just like Visconti and Medioli did with the conversation pieces, Fellini criticizes the false stability, calm and perfection in Morandi's painting.

In conclusion, we might say that despite the myths surrounding Visconti's rigorous pursuit of originality, his staff made extensive use of counterfeit paintings for his film's set decorations, whether or not these were combined with real paintings. What is striking is that when paintings have a narrative function, they are often not originals but imitations, or even those that only copy the style of originals. Sometimes, as with *Conversation Piece*, the compositions are even adapted to support the story and characters. Rubens's *Battle of the Amazons* was adapted in *The Leopard* to serve as *Arturo Corbera at the Battle of Antioch*. In the case of the Greuze in *The Leopard*, in which a copy was already mentioned in the novel, there was no need to use an original. Just like with *Il bacio* in *Senso*, with *Le fils puni* in *The Leopard* and the conversation pieces in *Conversation Piece*, we are dealing with a Baxandall-like appropriation in which B (Visconti) gives a new twist to A (Greuze, the conversation pieces), instead of the other way around.

223 Michael Walker, *Hitchcock's Motifs* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), pp. 328-9.

224 *L'univers esthétique de Pasolini* (Paris: Persona, 1984). Francesco Galluzzi, *Pasolini e la pittura* (Roma: Bulzoni, 1994).

225 Mauro Aprile Zanetti, *La Natura Morta de La Dolce Vita* (New York: Bloc-notes/Italian Cultural Institute, 2008).

The (Photo) Portrait and the Remembrance of Things Past

Now that we have examined paintings in Visconti's film sets, especially those with a narrative and symbolic function, it is time to look at a specific category: portraits. Within the aristocratic and high bourgeois milieu of early twentieth century Milan where Visconti grew up, it was still normal to have one's portrait painted as is shown by the self-portrait of his father at Grazzano and the two beautiful portraits of Visconti's maternal grandparents by Cesare Tallone, still on display at the Villa Erba in Cernobbio.²²⁶ When portraits play a role in Visconti's films, however, they are often photographed portraits.²²⁷ In addition, some images of his characters are just like family portraits, such as those of the Salina family gathered around Don Fabrizio in *The Leopard*. If the previous chapters underscored the appropriation of *painting* in Visconti's work, research on *The Damned* and *Death In Venice* shows the important role that *photography* played on several levels, both in the diegesis and in the pre-production, and this in spite of the continuing prevalence of *painterly* images in, for example, the opening scene of *Death in Venice* (see Chapter 8 for a discussion on painting and seascapes in *Death in Venice*).

Portraits in Visconti and the role of photography. From *Ossessione* to *Rocco*

We will begin with a glimpse of Visconti's use of photography in his early films. In his debut, *Ossessione*, images are part of the set decor but do not otherwise play a significant role. Only scarce decoration hangs on the walls. When Gino enters the trattoria, we only see bottles behind the bar and a curled and crooked piece of cardboard into which postcards are inserted. The cards are shot out of focus so

226 The portrait of Giuseppe Visconti and that of his father, painted both by Giuseppe Visconti around 1900, are still hanging in the Borgo of Grazzano Visconti and are therefore publicly visible. The portraits of Anna and Luigi Erba hang in the main hall of Villa Erba in Cernobbio. They are dated 1896 and mentioned in the monograph *Cesare Tallone* (Milano: Electa, 2005) by Gigliola Tallone. Under the portico of the Palazzotto della Istituzione at Grazzano Visconti there is also a fresco by Giuseppe Visconti from 1937. Here he has shown the whole family (except for his ex-wife), as 'donors' in a pseudo-Renaissance environment honouring the Madonna and offering her Grazzano. Renato Passerini ed., *Grazzano Visconti. Città d'arte* (s.a., s.l.), p. 95. Giuseppe Visconti also painted several other frescoes for Grazzano Visconti and oversaw the full restoration of the castle and the neo-medieval village around it. The latter is now a tourist attraction. Giuseppe Visconti also founded a trade school to keep alive old crafts.

227 Except for a painted portrait by Leonor Fini, most portraits of Visconti himself are photographic, including beautiful examples by Horst Horst, Federico Patellani and Richard Avedon. This may have also affected Visconti's selections in his work.



Fig. 23 (left). *Rocco and His Brothers* (Luchino Visconti 1960). Fig. 24 (right). *La terra trema* (Luchino Visconti 1948).

they could be either film stills or images of the local landscape. In the bedroom there are plenty of mirrors but, again, little else except a bag with pockets for postcards, half hanging down the wall. Two prints are pinned against the wall next to the bed. Next to and on top of the dresser we see two little portraits of a woman and a girl, respectively. One picture has also been inserted into the mirror frame, the way actors do in dressing rooms. These images are not emphasized neither by the dialogue, the performance of the actors, or the camera framing, so we do not inquire as to who the people in the pictures might be and whether they might be important to the plot.

Unlike *Osessione*, other Visconti films use photographic portraits to make clear references both to characters from the plot *and* the story of the film – in the terminology of Bordwell and Thompson – and thus even to predeceased characters in the diegesis.²²⁸ These are family portraits that, in Visconti's films, are often *photos*. A good example is the family picture in *Rocco and His Brothers*, at the beginning of the film. The southern Italian family lives as squatters in a Milanese basement. When Nadia (Annie Girardot), a prostitute, flees the police by invading their home, she gazes at the family in the photo and connects them to those living in the house. As spectators, we get to know them as well. The photographed portrait of the Valastro family at the beginning of *La terra trema* works in the same way. Following the photo, the family members' names are listed one by one by Lucia, one of the daughters, so we get to identify them as well. This is the same family portrait from which Cola takes his farewell when he secretly runs off. Pointedly, and almost emblematic, in both family portraits is the inconspicuous father figure. The father of *La terra trema* died drowning like so many other fishermen. He is gone, just like the fathers in *Rocco*, *Vaghe stelle dell'Orsa* (*Sandra*, 1965), *Death in Venice*, *Ludwig* and *Conversation Piece*, where we have mothers and their children but absent fathers. Yet the absence of the father is clearly problematized

228 In *Film Art* Bordwell and Thompson make a distinction between plot and story. The *story* includes all elements of the narrative, including the non-visible, implied parts, such as references to previous events. The story is displayed in a linear way. The *plot* only includes everything shown during the screening of the film, in picture and sound. It does not have to be linear, but might contain flashbacks or flash-forwards. The plot can also show events in a concentrated way, for example, through elliptical editing. Plot also includes non-diegetic elements such as credits, inserts and off-screen music. Bordwell/Thompson 2013, pp. 75-6.

only occasionally, such as Sandra's Jewish father in *Vaghe stelle dell'Orsa* who died in a concentration camp. Here we are dealing with someone who is not part of the plot but frequently part of the story, to employ Bordwell and Thompson's distinction here. A statue of Sandra's father is revealed at the end of the film but he is never visible in the film as an actual person, neither in flashbacks nor through photographic portraits in the decor. In *Ossessione* the expectant mother (Giovanna) dies before the protagonist (Gino) can become a father; in *The Damned*, the father figure is killed in the first fifteen minutes; and in *L'innocente* the real father of Giuliana's child dies abroad. Visconti's biographer Laurence Schifano suggests that Visconti might have been settling accounts with his own absent father.²²⁹

The photo in *La terra trema* refers to a time when the family was still together. Despite the rigidity of the poses, the picture looks like an ideal portrait, comparable to the conversation pieces of *Conversation Piece*, and also to that film's torn, disintegrated family – even if that becomes clear only gradually. Thus *La terra trema*'s photo denotes the loss of a happy, unified family. Another photo in the film has that same nostalgic effect: the one of 'Ntoni (Antonio Arcidiacono) in military dress, inserted into a mirror frame. The picture refers to 'Ntoni's better years on the mainland like a *pars pro toto*. Cola (Giuseppe Arcidiacono) sees escaping the island as an ideal solution to his constrained situation. He wants 'Ntoni's army uniform which is much finer than his own rags. The one's past offers the other hope for a better future. The only painted portrait in the film is a Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ picture, which expresses the powerlessness of religion among so much misery. It is similar to the prayer cards placed on the dying grandfather: an empty ritual that cannot offer amelioration.

In *Bellissima* (1951), Maddalena (Anna Magnani) sets out to have photos taken of her daughter, Maria (Tina Apicella), to compete for a coveted role in director Alessandro Blasetti's upcoming film. She takes Maria to an old-fashioned studio photographer who puts her on an antique chair against a painted backdrop and a floor covered with Persian carpets (for the mirrors in *Bellissima* and the studio photographer, see Chapter 10).²³⁰ While the photographer does his best to reassure the girl, Maddalena makes a scene. This pushy mother pressures the man to have the pictures ready as soon as possible, much to the annoyance the photographer's disabled wife who bullies her husband and seems to be the real boss of the studio. Curiously, the photographer is played by Arturo Bragaglia who ran a photo lab in Cinecittà during the war years, where Visconti's later cinematographer, Giuseppe Rotunno, began his career as a darkroom assistant.²³¹ Bragaglia was a scion of a family of photographers, his father being administrative director of the Cines film company. Bragaglia's brother, Anton Giulio, earned the most renown

229 Visconti's parents divorced in 1924. The proceedings were accompanied by a bitter trial over the Erba company shares held by his mother. Visconti stayed with his mother, together with his younger brother, Edoardo, and his young sisters, Uberta and Ida Pace. His eldest brothers, Guido and Luigi, and his eldest sister, Anna, henceforth lived with their father. The disintegration of a family was a theme Visconti later explored in his films such as *La terra trema*, *Rocco and His Brothers*, and *The Damned*, but also in such unrealized projects as an adaptation of Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks*. Schifano (2009), pp. 151-5.

230 For the mirrors in *Bellissima* and the studio photographer, see ch. 10.

231 Interview with Giuseppe Rotunno, 20 April 2004.



Fig. 25. *Bellissima* (Luchino Visconti 1951).

among all the siblings because of his futuristic photography called *Fotodinamismo* (*Photodynamism*) with which Arturo assisted him. Later during the 1910s, Arturo ran a photo studio with his other brother Carlo Ludovico where the divas of Italian silent film were photographed.²³² Carlo Ludovico participated with Anton Giulio in the latter's futuristic adventures in the theatre and, as a result of holding all sorts of jobs in the film industry, he developed into a successful genre film director by the 1930s. In addition to his studio and laboratory at Cinecittà, Arturo played character roles, including the comedies of his brother Carlo Ludovico, from the late thirties on.

The bond between studio photography and film would prove to be a close and fruitful one in Italy. According to set photographer Osvaldo Civirani, *Ossessione's* cinematographer Aldo Tonti had been more active as still photographer in the Studio Vaselli than as cameraman in his early career. Beginning in 1934, he became a cinematographer and worked on twenty-three features before *Ossessione*, including propaganda films, comedies by Mario Mattoli, and the realist drama, *Fari nella nebbia* (Gianni Franciolini, 1942).²³³ This might also explain the cinematographic similarities between *Fari nella nebbia* and *Ossessione* (for *Fari nella nebbia*, see Chapters 7 and 8). Aldo Graziati, a.k.a. G.R. Aldò, cinematographer of *La terra trema* and *Senso*, began his career as a studio photographer at the French studio, Harcourt, during the war. From there he moved to still photography on film sets and eventually became a director of photography.²³⁴ One of *Bellissima's* two directors of photography was the French still photographer, Paul Ronald, who replaced Piero Portalupi, when Visconti became fed up with the latter's excessively technical explanations.²³⁵

232 See e.g. the photos of Lyda Borelli made by Studio Bragaglia. In *Penombra*, 1, (January 1919), pp. 8-9.

233 Interview with Osvaldo Civirani, 22 May 2004.

234 Roberto Ellero et.al., *Aldò. Tra cinema e fotografia* (Venezia: Comune di Venezia, 1987).

235 Antonio Maraldi, *Paul Ronald, un fotografo francese nel cinema italiano/ Paul Ronald, un photographe français dans le cinéma italien* (Cesena: Il Ponte Vecchio, 2003), p. 25. The anecdote is at odds with another one: that Visconti was happy to discuss all the takes with Graziati, but stopped doing so when Graziati's successor, Robert Krasker, made it clear that he wasn't interested. Interview with Suso Cecchi D'Amico, 11 May 2004.

The absence of photographic portraits in Visconti's historical films, *Senso* and *The Leopard*, is also noteworthy. This could be explained partly by the film's periodisation although photographic portraiture had already become popular among the middle classes by the 1860s. Even more striking is the lack of photographs in *Ludwig*, which covers a period from the 1860s to the 1880s. Does this absence emphasize Ludwig's aversion to family ties? Or was the photographic portrait not aristocratic enough? We may notice painted portraits in all three films but no explicit family ties to the living figures that we saw in *Conversation Piece*. Photo portraits and photography itself, though, play an important role in two historical films: *The Damned* and *Death in Venice*, both set in the early twentieth century – the 1930s and the 1910s respectively.

Photographic portraits in *The Damned*

Just like in *La terra trema*, photographed portraits in *The Damned* have a nostalgic charge. In the opening scene Joachim von Essenbeck (Albrecht Schoenhals), a steel baron and family patriarch, lovingly kisses a photo resting on a dressing table of a young man in a pilot outfit (supposedly his deceased eldest son who was killed in the First World War). The photo seems to refer to Visconti's oldest brother, Guido, who was killed at El Alamein during the Second World War.²³⁶ On the same table we see several pictures including one of a woman (Essenbeck's wife?), Kaiser Wilhelm II chopping wood, and a small oval photo of Field Marshal and President Paul von Hindenburg, the official head of state.²³⁷ The film opens in February 1933 when Hitler has been in power for a month.²³⁸ These portraits characterize Essenbeck as a Wilhelmine aristocrat – a very nineteenth-century man. Soon he proves also to be someone willing to sacrifice his family and his principles to further his business. The amount of photographic portraits in Essenbeck's room indicates his strong attachment to his past. When he exits the room, we follow him through a mirror alongside a second table with photographed portraits. In the final scene in which Joachim's daughter-in-law, Sophie (Ingrid Thulin), and her lover, Friedrich Bruckmann (Dirk Bogarde), are married before being forced to commit suicide by her son, Martin (Helmut Berger), we see Friedrich in a room where Joachim's photos with the Emperor and Hindenburg are still present. Soon after, we see the picture of Kaiser Wilhelm in uniform again on the hall table, and in the room where Sophie and Friedrich are forced to commit suicide a picture of Hindenburg rests on the table. By this point, with Joachim and many other Essenbecks now murdered, the photos take on a forlorn aspect: no one has bothered to remove

236 Servadio 1983, pp. 79-80.

237 Hindenburg would remain head of state until his death in August 1934, thus even after the Night of the Long Knives, but as he was by then very old, weak and increasingly senile, in reality it was chancellor Hitler who ruled. Hitler had already passed the Enabling Act in March 1933 that allowed him to rule by emergency decree. But as Hindenburg still represented the power of the army, Hitler bided his time. As the SA excesses grew, the Night of the Long Knives was welcomed by Hindenburg and the German army, though one may doubt if the president really understood its import.

238 The opening scene of the film is connected to the Reichstag fire of 27 February 1933. This event led to the Reichstag Fire Decree that abolished all the civil liberties, including freedom of press, freedom of expression, and secrecy of post and telephone, and gave the Nazis the power to imprison whomever they disliked. *The Damned* hints at this almighty state control various times, e.g., in the ...



Fig. 26. *The Damned* (Luchino Visconti 1969).

Joachim's tastes and his very image from the nearly empty house. The Essenbecks' house is still filled with traces of the past, even though no one remains for whom that past would have any meaning.²³⁹

Visconti typifies the other family members through the presence of paintings and photographs in *their* settings. The SA-man Konstantin (Reinhard/René Kolldehoff), Joachim's second son, has no modern 'suspicious' wall art but no old masters either. At his place, we see an SA poster next to the dressing table and a picture of Hitler, and a small Nazi banner against the mirror. We also see some pictures on a stool. We get a good view of a picture of Hitler surrounded by SA troops when, in a medium close up shot, Konstantin pins a Nazi insignia on his smoking jacket in front of the mirror. The Social Democrat Herbert Thalmann (Umberto Orsini), Joachim's son-in-law, has some modern paintings on his wall, such as a kind of cityscape reminiscent of De Chirico's empty squares. His brown dressing table is in a somewhat Art Deco style (including a brightly coloured parrot as *objet*). His wife Elisabeth (Charlotte Rampling), Joachim's daughter, has a pearl grey, Art Nouveau-styled vanity while the patterned wallpaper and carpet are in light green tones. Light colours dominate in contrast to Konstantin's dark interior. This would seem to create a visual contrast between the 'light' and 'dark' characters.

...scene in which Aschenbach gives Sophie a tour around the SS archive. In the middle of the film the infamous Night of the Long Knives takes place (30 June-2 July 1934), in which Hitler settled accounts with the SA leadership but also with other political opponents of the conservative parties who wanted to get rid of him. Visconti reduced the 'cleansing' to a massacre in a Bavarian hotel. He suggests that homosexual orgies preceded the massacre though little of the sex is explicitly depicted. Homosexuality was precisely the argument that the Nazis used to justify their deeds afterwards, instead of acknowledging the intra-party struggle between Hitler and the SA. By this 'cleansing' Hitler confirmed himself as *de facto* sole ruler. Soon he arranged *de jure* as well that officially he stood above the law. See Paul Maracin, *The Night of the Long Knives: 48 Hours that Changed the History of the World* (New York: The Lyons Press, 2004).

²³⁹ It is not clear when exactly the final scene is supposed to take place, but at least some time after the Night of the Long Knives (June 1934). Therefore theoretically the picture of Hindenburg could still refer to him as head of state, as he died in August 1934. My impression though is that the picture rather refers to the past of the villa and its owners, not the present.

In the Thalmann's we see only a single photo: they do not appear to cling to the past, even if Elisabeth's Art Nouveau is already a bit out of fashion for the 1930s.

At the private concert in honour of Joachim's birthday, Visconti reintroduces the family: a complacent Joachim next to a picture of Wilhelm II, a serious-looking Elisabeth (she is the emotional one, compared to her older, calculating, and plotting sister-in-law, Sophie), and a bored Konstantin. Later, after Joachim is killed by Friedrich, Sophie and he try to pin the blame on Thalmann. At that moment we see in Thalmann's room a famous Expressionist painting of a girl with peonies, *Mädchen with Pfingstrosen* (1909) by Alexej von Jawlensky.²⁴⁰ The modern artwork signals Thalmann as representative of the Weimar Republic. Sophie's heavy make up at the film's end is also strongly reminiscent of von Jawlensky's Expressionist portrait.²⁴¹

In the reception areas of the Essenbeck house, we see old masters on the walls, but so unobtrusively that they have practically become part of the wallpaper. We never see a prominent and recognisable painted family portrait, while such was not uncommon even in 1933 among the elite: for example, take George Harcourt's painted portrait of the Krupp family (1931) on whom Visconti based the Essenbecks.²⁴² The recurring images of the family at the dinner table in *The Damned* can also serve as a kind of living family portrait, a painting that nonetheless gets emptier as more family members die.

Outside of the Essenbeck mansion, the huge photo portrait of the deceased Joachim that adorns the boardroom of the steel factory stands out, alongside equally large photos of the steelworks themselves. Whereas inconspicuous old landscapes and portraits adorn the walls 'at home', photography is associated with the factory. The absentee overlord thus remains present in the background though no one takes any note of him. The populist images in the room of Martin's girlfriend, Olga (Florinda Bolkan), are also noteworthy. It is left unclear whether she is a model, actress or prostitute (or all three), but her interior is simpler, less chic than the Essenbeck villa. Pictures of movie stars and two Japanese woodcuts can be seen on the back wall. The pictures are of the German star, Brigitte Helm in *Die wunderbare Lüge der Nina Petrovna* (Hanns Schwarz, 1929) and Rudolf Valentino and Nita Naldi in *Cobra* (Joseph Henabery, 1925). Helm was a possible influence on the look of Thulin's Sophie, with her wavy blonde hair and her cool glamour, while Berger's Martin, with his hair combed backwards and slicked with brilliantine, looks like a German Valentino. Oddly enough, the movie stars in these photos were archetypal celebrities, but of the silent cinema which was already

240 The painting must have been an imitation. The present owner, the Von-der-Heydt-Museum in Wuppertal, has no proof of any contact with Visconti or his crew during the production of *The Damned*. The painting was not lent out for exhibitions in those years. Sabine Fehleemann (Von-der-Heydt-Museum) to the author, 10 and 12 August 2005.

241 Piero Tosi said that Ingrid Thulin initially resisted against the heavy, Expressionist make up for the final scene. So gradually he put up a little more every day until she was used to it. Interview with Tosi, 14 April 2004.

242 Harcourt's painted portrait of the Krupp family is now in the St. Andreas Dominikanerkonvent, Cologne, Germany. An illustration of it can be found at the Fondo Visconti, among the documentation of *The Damned*. See Francesco Russo, 'Gli esclusi pericolosi del regno dei Krupp', [*L'Espresso*], 6 January 1960, C36-010178, Fondo Visconti, Fondazione Gramsci, Rome. In the preparation of the film the possibility of a painted family portrait was accounted for.



Fig. 27- 28. *The Damned* (Luchino Visconti 1969).

passé by 1933. The photos are thus from four and eight years earlier than the time in which the film takes place – between the burning of the Reichstag on 27 February 1933, and the Night of the Long Knives (in which the SS exterminated the SA by order of Hitler) on 30 June 1934. More contemporary stars such as Lilian Harvey, Marlene Dietrich, and Toni van Eyck, are less visible along the right wall. The smaller size *and* the number of pictures simply tacked onto the wall and the absence of large-sized oil paintings indicate Olga's relative poverty. In short, the signals emitted by what we see on the wall clearly contrast with those of the villa (that is, the world of Essenbecks).

Photography in *Death in Venice*. Portraits, representation and sources

In *Death in Venice* paintings occur within the sets without having an emblematic or narrative signification. When the German composer, Gustav von Aschenbach (Dirk Bogarde), arrives at his room at the Hotel Des Bains on the Venetian Lido, the place is adorned with elegant Art Nouveau furniture. Next to the door hangs a sunny landscape with a rock, sand, and sea, an ironic comment on the lack of sun upon Aschenbach's arrival. Next to his dressing table rests an equally light coloured pastel of an elegantly dressed woman seated on the beach who looks at the viewer. Later Visconti shows us a female painter working on the beach though her work is not visible. The interiors of Aschenbach and his friend Alfried's (Mark Burns) chalet are almost a rustic cliché, apart from the almost too new white walls. Antlers, a painting of wild flowers, and an almost unrecognisable dark portrait of a man all fit within this rustic atmosphere.

Much more striking in *Death in Venice* is the role of *photography*. One of the first things that Aschenbach does when unpacking is to install a case with photographs. He brings his Munich past with him. He kisses the photographic portraits of his wife and daughter respectfully before going to dinner at the hotel. These kisses are seen from the same camera angle and framed in the same way up close. The scene ends with a full screen shot of the photo of Aschenbach's wife who has demurely folded her hands and looks heavenward in a reverent pose. She stands as a synecdoche for Aschenbach's own condition: controlled, modest, distinguished,



Fig. 29-31. *Death in Venice* (Luchino Visconti 1971).

and elegant. After being pestered by some children in an elevator, who notice him gazing at the teenager Tazio (Björn Andresen), Aschenbach looks desperately and shamefacedly at his wife's portrait. At the end of the film, when his wife and child are no longer important to him, we no longer see the pictures. His thoughts are elsewhere – with Tazio.

Photography is also a constant presence in the figure of a photographer with his camera and tripod, who repeatedly comes into view though he has no dialogue.²⁴³ Throughout the film, he is associated with Tazio's presence on the beach. Metaphorically, he reinforces and doubles the motif of 'the look', which is largely concerned with the gazes between Aschenbach and Tazio and our repeated views of them. These gazes cause tension as Aschenbach conceives his interest first as a detached, mental, and moral appreciation but then has to accept, like his Nietzschean friend Alfried has already suggested, that beauty is immoral and sensual. After Aschenbach has first arrived in Venice and is overlooking the beach from his balcony, we see neither the photographer nor Tazio. Because of the *sirocco* the weather is grey and the beach almost empty. On his first day at the beach, Aschenbach *and* we notice Tazio walking along the various bathers from left to right (the camera pans along with him). He passes a couple of whom the man proudly poses for the camera. The photographer takes the picture and then removes the glass negative from the camera. As it was filmed out of focus, this act doesn't draw our attention too much, just like other actions by the guests, the hotel staff, and vendors.

However, the photographer frequently returns. Aschenbach buys strawberries from an Italian vendor catering to tourists. Later, an elderly American rejects the strawberries because of the danger of eating fresh fruit outside in warm weather. Visconti here appears to be ironically foreshadowing Aschenbach's fate: whoever is careless at a beach may just die of cholera or a broken heart. After the seller has receded in the frame, the camera pans right and we see the photographer in medium shot. A hard cut then suggests that the photographer himself captures the subsequent shot: a picture like an autochrome, worthy of a Monet or Manet (see Chapter 7 for a discussion of Manet and Monet versus *Death in Venice*, and see Chapter 8 for a comparison of the seascapes in *Death in Venice* to painting).²⁴⁴ While Aschenbach sits on the edge of a rowboat watching the sea, a group of ladies pass past. Visconti staged this shot carefully. Producer Mario Gallo confirmed this and mentioned that he played a small role in completing the composition of the scene.²⁴⁵ Though the ladies dressed in white with their white umbrellas were beautiful, Visconti felt something was missing. Gallo then suggested that one of the ladies sport a black umbrella. It worked perfectly as a premonition of death that Visconti wanted to give the whole movie, Gallo said.²⁴⁶

243 The actor who played the photographer is not listed in the credits of the film and has no dialogue in the film.

244 In the first place I am reminded of Édouard Manet's *La plage de Boulogne-sur-Mer* (1869) because of the long shot-like overview, the high horizon and the view of the beach guests on their back.

245 Interview with Mario Gallo, 21 May 2004. When I visited him, Gallo had a still by set photographer Mario Tursi of the scene with the upturned boat and the ladies with the umbrellas on his wall.

246 Interview with Luchino Gastel, 12 July 2004. Visconti's cousin Luchino Gastel also pointed me to the striking presence of the photo camera.

After Aschenbach has returned from the train station intending to leave Venice, we see him happy and relaxed on his balcony. His case having been sent to a wrong address, he has an alibi to remain on the Lido near Tadzio. From his point of view we see Tadzio in a light blue jumpsuit walking along the beach amidst the tourists. In the background the photographer is taking another picture. In the second half of the film, we leave the beach and see Aschenbach pursuing Tadzio through Venice. The decor indicates the increasing morbidity of his pursuit. First we see supposedly smelly disinfectants, then fires on the streets and blackened walls, and finally a pharmacist who refuses to help when Aschenbach collapses in front of his door. This last scene takes place in ominous darkness. In the film's final scene on the beach, not only does the light return but also the camera, only this time without the photographer. Almost everyone has left except for a few Russian tourists, much like the first image that Aschenbach – and we – had of the beach. A photographer is apparently no longer necessary now that the tourists are gone but his equipment is still there.²⁴⁷

Bored, Tadzio challenges his darker-skinned friend, Jaschiu (Sergio Garfagnoli), to an impromptu wrestling match. The two begin to wrestle in the foreground with the camera covered in the familiar black cloth on a tripod. Later on, Jaschiu pushes Tadzio into the mud with his head. Tadzio, thinking that Jaschiu has gone too far, walks into the sea but, because of the ebb tide, only wades for a few meters through shallow water. Like an indistinct shadow, we see him in the distance. The photographer's camera stands in the right foreground. Visconti thus creates depth in a formal way just as he does in other scenes featuring flowerpots and bouquets (see Chapter 7). Yet, is there also a symbolic meaning? The end of the gaze? Just as the photographer's camera is not able to capture any more images, Aschenbach feels his life slipping away. Not for nothing is his view of Tadzio obscured by the sun. According to the film's producer, Mario Gallo, Visconti originally thought of placing a film camera in this scene to suggest a bridge between the nineteenth and the twentieth century, and the beginning of a new era to which Aschenbach does not belong. But they eventually concluded that it would be too incongruous, too much of a *Fremdkörper* (odd man out). A photo camera was more common and was therefore less disruptive to the continuity. Scriptwriter Nicola Badalucco recalls, 'The tripod of the photo camera on the beach, or the man who sits on the upturned boat. Such images arose not from the scenario, but they were ideas of the director, suggestions he had already formed from the baseline of the city, the water, the hotel, and the beach'.²⁴⁸

Nevertheless, the medium of film is not entirely disregarded in *Death in Venice*. When Aschenbach speaks to an employee at Cook's in Piazza San Marco, we briefly see a large poster promoting the Pathé Kok, a home movie projector introduced by Pathé Frères in 1912. Cinema also seems to have played another role on a different

247 While most representations of photos and the photographer in the film were inventions of Visconti, the photo camera in this particular scene was already in the Mann novella: 'A photographic apparatus, apparently without an owner, stood on its tripod at the seaside, while a black cloth covering it rattled in the cool breeze'. (my translation). Thomas Mann, *Der Tod in Venedig* (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1982/1977), p. 67. The novella first appeared in limited edition in 1911, then in the literary magazine *Neue Rundschau*, and in 1913 as individual edition with Fischer Verlag.

248 Interview with Nicola Badalucco, 11 May 2005.



Fig. 32. *Death in Venice* (Luchino Visconti 1971).



Fig. 33. Carla Erba (autochrome Lumière, c. 1911). Private collection.

level. *Rimini, l'Ostenda d'Italia*, a short film from around 1913, probably by Luca Comerio, contains a shot that closely resembles *Death in Venice*'s plan sequence-like shots in the Hotel Des Bains's lobby at the beginning.²⁴⁹ As the camera pans through the lobby, we get an impression of the hotel guests' wealth and social status, and the refinement of the grand hotel's entourage. In 1913, Visconti was six or seven, so it is unlikely that a film such as *Rimini, l'Ostenda d'Italia* made much of an impression on him, but the shot perfectly echoes the atmosphere in *Death in Venice*. Moreover, Visconti spent his childhood holidays in Rimini at a time before mass tourism, though the city then possessed several grand hotels. He could have been one of the filmed persons in *Rimini, l'Ostenda d'Italia*.

Photography not only played an important role in *Death in Venice*, but also in the production's preparation. According to Visconti and his staff, the production design was predominantly based on photographic documentation in contrast to, for

²⁴⁹ In *Cinema muto italiano. I film 'dal vero'. 1895-1914* (Gemona: la Cineteca del Friuli, 2002), p. 414, Aldo Bernardini mentions the film in his list of uncertain titles, but according to the City of Rimini, who owns a copy of the film, it is by Luca Comerio. Documentary historian Marco Bertozzi pointed the film out to me. It was screened in 1995 at the Cinema Ritrovato festival in Bologna.

instance, *Senso*. These were largely historic photos of Venice in the pre-First World War era. In an interview by Lino Micciché, Visconti asserted, ‘Let me forestall your question: the entire figurative reconstruction is based on documentation of photographic nature more than on art: photos of the Lido, pictures of Venice, photos of the fashion of the time. In that sort of thing, I’ve achieved by now a perfect collaboration with [costume designer] Piero Tosi. The problem is always to give a figuratively correct representation of an age, without falling into that wretched revocation of the historic film’.²⁵⁰

Tadzio’s mother (Silvana Mangano) was modelled after Visconti’s, Carla Erba. Tosi explains, ‘Especially when Silvana Mangano is standing on the beach with those enormous veils around her, that is an exact childhood memory of his. He told me, “I have forgotten so much. But now things from my childhood and my adolescence are so clear, they have returned so precisely, even smells”’ (on veils, see Chapter 6).²⁵¹ A Lumière autochrome of Visconti’s mother, probably made by her husband, served as an example for Tosi’s costume designs. The photo was made around 1911 in the garden of the Castello Grazzano, the Visconti’s country house at Piacenza.²⁵² In 1984, Tosi told me, ‘Now that I am organising this exhibition in Forio [in Visconti’s villa on Ischia], I have all the family photos in my hands. Back then I had nothing to do with the documentation myself. If only I had had those pictures during the making of *Death in Venice!* It was a shock to me. The moment was 1910, the time of Luchino’s childhood with his mother. There are pictures of his mother with the little ones that are truly miracles! I do not know why Luchino did not show them to me. I only had the one of the mother, maybe two, but not that whole collection, which would have been a treasure to me. I knew that in his study he had a huge folding screen around which he’d stuck old colour photographs of his mother, such as the one of her at a well, in a sky-blue dress with a huge veil around her. I could borrow only that one’.²⁵³

250 ‘Un incontro al magnetofono con Luchino Visconti’, in: Lino Micciché, *Morte a Venezia di Luchino Visconti* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1971), pp. 121-2. Tosi confirmed me that when preparing *Death in Venice* it was not pictorial as much as photographic sources that served the *mise en scène* of the film. Interview with Tosi, 21 September 1984. The atmosphere of the film, though, emanates something different, especially in the opening scene (see Chapter 8).

251 Interview with Tosi, 14 April 2004. These kind of giant veils were apparently popular around 1900, see the photos of actress Eleonora Duse by Mario Nunes Vais. [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nunes_Vais,_Mario_\(1856-1932\),_Eleonora_Duse_come_Margherita_Gautier_ne_La_Signora_delle_Camelie_di_Alexander_Dumas_fils,_1904_circa.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nunes_Vais,_Mario_(1856-1932),_Eleonora_Duse_come_Margherita_Gautier_ne_La_Signora_delle_Camelie_di_Alexander_Dumas_fils,_1904_circa.jpg).

252 This photograph is part of a series of four autochromes that were taken at Grazzano in 1911 and of which some copies remain. Three of them were printed in *Album Visconti* (1978), pp. 22-4. Autochromes were mostly taken by amateurs, not by professional photographers, according to photography historian Giovanna Ginex. Giovanna Ginex to the author, 9 March 2006. In her biography of Visconti, Laurence Schifano (Schifano, 2009), p. 47, attributes one of Visconti autochromes to professional photographer Emilio Sommariva, though the latter never made autochromes and worked indoors in his studio exclusively. In 1936 Sommariva did take a glamorous studio portrait of the elder Carla Erba, a few years before she died (1939). See also Giovanna Ginex, *Divine. Emilio Sommariva fotografo. Opere scelte 1910-1930* (Busto Arsizio: Nomos Edizioni, 2004).

253 Interview with Tosi, 21 September 1984.



Fig. 34 (left). *Laura* (Otto Preminger 1944). Fig. 35 (right). *La signora di tutti* (Max Ophüls 1934).

Classical Hollywood cinema and Italian silent cinema. Prototype and antitype

To deepen our understanding of Visconti's use of portraits, a comparison might shed some light. In *Hitchcock's Motifs*, Michael Walker categorizes the meanings of painted portraits in classical Hollywood cinema: 1) the power of the patriarchal (sometimes matriarchal) character or portraits of fathers who founded empires; 2) the power of the family tradition, as with the gallery of ancestors; 3) the lost love (like a lost wife); and 4) the desire of the beholder.²⁵⁴ Such connotations often occur when the portrait is of a young woman and the spectators admiring her are men as in *Laura* (Otto Preminger, 1944) or *The Woman in the Window* (Fritz Lang, 1944). When the portrait is painted within the filmic narrative, desire is the most usual association, even when the classic gender division of male artist and female model is reversed. The dominant idea within all these categories is that the portrait's subject is of lasting importance. In order to obtain this status, however, the character needs to die first, either before or during the filmic narrative. In the American cinema of the 1940s the painted portrait is often linked to murder and suicide. Painters kill their models, in particular when the latter are young, and thus murdered victims remain visible by their portraits. Suicide occurs just as often with painters as with their models.

The association of painted portraits with violent deaths was a central theme at the 1991 conference 'Le portrait peint au cinéma/The Painted Portrait in Film', held at the Louvre, whose proceedings were published in *Iris*.²⁵⁵ Thomas Elsaesser (1992) emphasized the feeling of fatality that looms over so many painted portraits in films. Having a painted portrait is a hazardous enterprise for a young female character. The portrait ignites passions in the painter or in other men that may lead to violence or self-destruction. Other men can observe the woman of their dreams without

254 Michael Walker, *Hitchcock's Motifs* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), p. 320.

255 Thomas Elsaesser, 'Mirror, Muse, Medusa: Experiment Perilous', *Le portrait peint au cinéma. Iris* 14-15, (Autumn 1992), pp. 147-59. See in the same issue also: Susan Felleman, 'The Moving Picture Gallery', pp. 193-200, which delves also in 1940s American cinema, plus my own article 'Il Fuoco or the Fatal Portrait. The XIXth Century in the Italian Silent Cinema', pp. 55-66, which analyses and contextualizes the fatal portrait in the Italian silent film *Il Fuoco* (Giovanni Pastrone, 1915).

limitation, which may be more embarrassing when they are not her choice. Susan Felleman's book, *Art in the Cinematic Imagination* (2006), reasserts this by taking a gendered perspective of male necrophilic desire in classical Hollywood cinema.²⁵⁶

Italian silent film of the 1910s and 1920s also possessed the same morbid and fatal attitude of artists and their models. Painters and sculptors may immortalize models in their art, but when a model and idealized reality no longer coincide, both artwork and model can be destroyed. The artist also finds that he feels entitled to do so, being blind to reality by his love for his work, his model or both. Examples include *L'idolo infranto* (Emilio Ghione, 1913), *La Gioconda* (Eleuterio Rodolfi, 1916), *La chiamavano Cosetta* (Eugenio Perego, 1917), and *Il processo Clemenceau* (Alfredo De Antoni, 1917).²⁵⁷ Alternatively portraits also may serve as positive catalysts. After their death, painted figures may serve as protectors for the living even through their literal weight. An example is *Il nodo* (Gaston Ravel, 1921) in which the heavy, huge portrait of the self-sacrificing girl crushes the villain of the story. Of course, the above-mentioned cinematic narrative conventions have predecessors in other art forms as well, as Steven Jacobs's *Framing Pictures: Film and the Visual Arts* (2011) explains in its analysis of the works of Kris and Kurz, von Schlosser and Wittkower.²⁵⁸

Two notable examples should be mentioned that precede Visconti's first films and that contain a striking use of photographic and painted portraits: *La signora di tutti* (*Everybody's Woman*, Max Ophüls, 1934) and *Intermezzo* (Gregory Ratoff, 1939). As one film is an Italian production and the other was shown in Italy during the war years despite the Fascist regime's distribution boycott of American films, Visconti could have easily seen both. Portrait photography in cinema is often used to communicate with the absent whether through death, divorce or a physical, geographical separation. *Intermezzo* provides a good example in which violinist Holger Brandt (Leslie Howard) has left his family for Anita (Ingrid Bergman), his daughter's piano teacher.²⁵⁹ After a tour they hang out on the Côte d'Azur, but Holger cannot get away from his daughter, Anne Marie, due to the presence of a picture of her and of a local French girl who bears a strong resemblance to her. Eventually a family friend named Thomas, who is also Anita's mentor, persuades him to leave her for his daughter. Holger fails to get back into line. When he sees a picture of a girl in a shop, he buys a camera there as a parting gift for his daughter. Anne Marie is hit by a car upon seeing her father, so Holger brings her home wounded. Symbolically enough, the gift camera is left behind on the street. The girl survives the accident and when she awakes, the first thing she sees is her room filled with pictures of her father: her 'object of desire'. Holger wants to run away but his wife implores him, 'Holger, come home'. He shuts the door and ends his *intermezzo* with Anita (on Ratoff's *Intermezzo*, see chapter 9 for its use of deep focus, and chapter 10 its the use of mirrors).

256 Susan Felleman, *Art in the Cinematic Imagination* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006).

257 Ivo Blom, 'Of Artists and Models. Italian Silent Cinema between Narrative Convention and Artistic Practice', *Acta Sapientiae Universitatis. Film and Media Studies* 7 (2013), pp. 97-110.

258 Steven Jacobs, *Framing Pictures. Film and the Visual Arts*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), pp. 43-7.

259 Art direction was by Lyle Wheeler, cinematography by Gregg Toland.

As mentioned above, painted portraits can be used for communication with absent characters. A few years before *Intermezzo*, Max Ophüls made the melodrama *La signora di tutti* in Italy in which Gaby (Isa Miranda) is a sexually uninhibited young woman who travels through the world and claims many intended and unintended victims. When the invalid Mrs. Nanni (Tatyana Pavlova) catches Gaby with her husband, Leonardo (Memo Benassi), she climbs out of her wheelchair and falls down a flight of stairs, killing herself. Afterwards, a life-size painted portrait of Mrs Nanni hangs above the fireplace and confronts Gaby with her sin, especially after they return from their honeymoon. The shadows from the room's window bars cast a large diagonal cross on the deceased woman's portrait causing Gaby to break down and to flee the mansion (see Chapter 9 for deep staging and mobile framing, and Chapter 10 for mirrors, in *La signora di tutti*).

In American and Italian films prior to Visconti's time, painted and photographed portraits often signified a fierce and sometimes destructive relationship between the sitter and the viewer or (in the case of films about artists) the creator. We don't see that kind of destructiveness directly in Visconti. Rather the portraits refer to the past of and a (unreachable) yearning for a no longer complete family, where the father is often missing, as in *La terra trema* and *Rocco and His Brothers*, and where the return to the older, more stable family environment is impossible. While in classic Hollywood movies, characters can still rule from beyond the grave through their portraits (think of Hitchcock's *Rebecca* (1940) or *Suspicion* (1941)), no one in *The Damned* cares about the meter-high photo of the family patriarch, Joachim von Essenbeck, in his own factory as well as pictures of such former rulers as Hindenburg that continue to reside, unobserved in the decor of the family villa. The observant viewer still sees them but the residents have moved on to more immediate concerns. Aschenbach in *Death in Venice* also clings to his past through the pictures of his family but gradually, as his infatuation with Tadzio overcomes him, they disappear – literally – out of sight. Instead of the photographed portraits from Aschenbach's past, actuality, in the figure of the photographer, takes over, as if he were recording what both the composer – and we – watch. In the end the photographer is gone just like the beachgoers – what remains is dying and death itself, symbolized by the immobile, inactive camera and the film slowing down to almost half-speed, epitomising the title of Laura Mulvey's book *Death 24x Frames per Second* (2006).²⁶⁰

260 Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x Frames per Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006).



Fig. 36. *Death in Venice* (Luchino Visconti 1971).

Costume and Painting in *Senso*

Critics often recognize paintings in filmic images. Yet, what is striking is how often they fall back on a *canon* of paintings and specifically *national* painting. When Visconti's historical film *Senso*, a film set in 1866, was released in 1954, Italian film critics immediately established connections with mid-nineteenth century painting, although they restricted their discussions to canonized versions of Italian painting. They referred to the war scenes of Giovanni Fattori for the film's battle scene and to Macchiaioli painters such as Silvestro Lega for the costumes.²⁶¹ In addition, critics also immediately identified two painterly quotations in the film, Hayez's romantic farewell scene, *Il bacio*, and Telemaco Signorini's brothel painting *La toilette del mattino*.²⁶² What is striking is that painters such as Fattori, Lega, and Signorini have been prominent in the twentieth century reevaluation of Italian nineteenth-century painting. As Italian counterparts of the Barbizon School and French Impressionism, they have become both canon and the avant-garde of Italian painting.

After researching the costumes of Visconti's films, it is evident that painting has been used in more complex, subtle, and indirect ways. *Arrière-garde*, genre painting and artistic photography have also played important roles in Visconti's visual schema. A combination of oral history, contextual research, and analysis of those films available on DVD clarifies this. This analysis will situate the use of costume and paintings within the cultural contexts of both the time of the films' production and that of the historical era represented in the narrative. Before delving into *Senso*'s costume design, we will begin with an analytical framework by looking at the historiography of film costume design.²⁶³

Film costume

In her article, 'Film costume', in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies* (1998) Pamela Church Gibson outlines the historiography of film costume design.²⁶⁴ She argues that costume and fashion have long been neglected and have lacked a theoretical framework in film and media studies despite widespread public interest. This was

261 Monti 1979. See also my published essay (Blom 2006) and my article in *Jong Holland* (2006).

262 Both paintings are discussed in relation to *Senso* in ch.1. For Macchiaioli painting see also ch. 1.

263 A shortened version of this chapter appeared as '*Senso* (1954) und die Maler der Arrière-garde', in Sophie Bertho and Bodo Plachta, *Die Herkulesarbeiten der Philologie* (Berlin: Weidler, 2008), pp. 265-86. An even shorter version was published as 'Kunst en mode in Luchino Visconti's film *Senso*', *Kunstlicht* 28, 2/3 (2007), pp. 81-5.

264 Pamela Church Gibson, 'Film costume', in: John Hill, Pamela Church Gibson eds., *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 36-42.

due to the aura of frivolity surrounding fashion that made it appear inappropriate for academic study. Resistance to fashion from the second wave feminists in the 1970s played a role, following Laura Mulvey's classic text 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' (1975) in which she defined Hollywood cinema as a binary between male subject (male gaze) and female object.²⁶⁵ With the advent of *consumer studies* within cultural studies, however, critical interest in film costume developed in, for example, Elizabeth Wilson's *Adorned in Dreams* (1985) and in the new feminist appropriation of fashion.²⁶⁶ In his text 'The Carole Lombard in Macy's Window' (1978), Charles Eckert identified the close association between cinema and merchandising, an observation that was later picked up by Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog.²⁶⁷

Church Gibson argues that a complicating factor is the diversity of film costume design. She distinguishes between: 1) studio design departments as in classic Hollywood, 2) *haute couture* designers working on specific film projects, 3) costumes for historical films where clothing is predominant, 4) low-budget films with existing, unobtrusive, and not specifically designed costumes, 5) films in which costumes stand out to the extent that they obtrude on the film's overall effectiveness and 6) non-Western cinema in which local codes and signs (semiotics) cannot be understood by Western critics. Costume can be understood as part of the *mise en scène*: it may reinforce or contradict meanings that are suggested by plot, character, and dialogue. Costumes then function as carriers of meaning or creators of emotional effects that allow the spectator to relate to the characters. As they are generally seen to be playing a secondary role within the filmic narrative; we are usually not interested in costumes themselves. That's why Church Gibson criticizes Bordwell and Thompson's *Film Art* because they consider costumes as *only* part of the narrative.²⁶⁸ Each part of a costume can become a prop. Costume colours can sustain the narrative instead of just having a fixed symbolic function. In *Johnny Guitar* (Nicholas Ray, 1954), for instance, the good but tough woman (Joan Crawford) wears male attire in black, traditionally connotated with dark or evil characters, while in Ray's *Rebel without a Cause* (1955) the red of James Dean's jacket does not merely connote alarm but is also linked to rebellion. Thus, the symbolic meanings of colour may shift. Indeed, in Visconti's *Senso*, blue instead of the traditional red dominates the love affair of Livia and Franz.²⁶⁹ Costumes are also part of genre and genre conventions – as icons of genres. Going beyond specific design aspects, costumes can become just as important as plot, characterisation, and setting, for example, in the 'costume film' where design is central to the genre's conventions.

265 Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen* 16, 3 (1975), pp. 6-18.

266 Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams. Fashion and Modernity*. (London: Virago, 1985).

267 Charles Eckert, 'The Carole Lombard in Macy's Window', *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, 3, 1 (1978), pp. 1-21. The text was republished in: Jane Gaines, Charlotte Herzog eds., *Fabrications. Costume and the Female Body* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 100-21. See also the articles by Gaines and Herzog in their own volume, and Jane Gaines, 'From Elephants to LUX Soap: The Programming and "Flow" of Early Motion Picture Exploitation', *The Velvet Light Trap*, 25 (Spring 1990), pp. 29-43.

268 Bordwell/Thompson (2013), pp. 119-24.

269 Allen Irwin, 'In the Realm of Senso', *Perpetual Nostalgia* (11 September 2012), <http://www.perpetualnostalgia.com/2012/09/in-realm-of-senso.html>.

New (or Third Wave) feminists replace the male gaze with female pleasure in costume, in sensuality, tactility or finishing. Sue Harper (1994) argues that costume can sometimes go against narrative, criticising the main storyline's moral or theme. Instead of the old negative association of fashion with fetishism (Mulvey), recent writings recast identification in a more positive way.²⁷⁰ In their volume *Fabrications: Costume & the Female Body* (1990), Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog indicate that film costume has finally been recognized as a serious object of feminist study, through looking at the conditions in which costumes are designed and marketed. The older approaches of voyeurism, fetishism, and masquerade have not totally disappeared and are still connected to the function of costume within the narrative, especially in classical Hollywood cinema. But with the rise of New Historicism and New Film History, historical contextualisation has become increasingly important. Thus, Gaines and Herzog asked themselves in their article, 'Norma Shearer as Marie Antoinette: Which Body Too Much?' (2005) which body dominates that of the historical 'star': Marie-Antoinette or the actress who plays her, Norma Shearer?²⁷¹ Church Gibson also highlights Gaines's research into how dress codes and costume plots create their own language. Using clothes to create star personae and to mask physical deficiencies is an important aspect of this process. Stella Bruzzi confirms Gaines's attitude in *Undressing Cinema* (1997), stating that costume can be understood as an independent discursive strategy.²⁷² We encounter both costumes that serve character and narrative *and* that draw attention to themselves in Visconti's film costumes – even if he probably did not wish for the latter.

The most pictorial film: *Senso*

For the pictorial context of Visconti's film costumes, this chapter focuses on *Senso*, discussed at length in Chapter 1. Visconti combined the romance of Camillo Boito's novella with Italian history, namely the Italian struggle against Austrian rule, from a riot at Venice's Teatro la Fenice to the Battle of Custoza in 1866 where Italy lost miserably even if Austria soon had to surrender the Veneto after losing the Austro-Prussian War. The Italian army, though, had insisted on spilling Italian blood, an attitude not endorsed by Visconti leading to the film's condemnation by the right wing. *Senso* is therefore a historical-political film about the birth of modern Italy and modern Europe, just like *The Leopard* and *Ludwig*. And as historical films often tell as much about the time in which they were produced as about the eras they represent, *Senso*, likewise, portrayed the sense of disenchantment felt by many Italian resistance fighters, including Visconti, after the Second World War (this is fully discussed in Chapter 1).²⁷³ *Senso*'s personification of the Risorgimento freedom fighter is Countess Livia's cousin, Marquis Roberto Ussoni (Massimo

270 Sue Harper, *Picturing the Past. The Rise and Fall of the Costume Film* (London: BFI, 1994).

271 Jane Gaines, Charlotte Herzog, 'Norma Shearer as Marie Antoinette: Which Body Too Much?' in: Rachel Mosely ed., *Fashioning the Filmstars. Dress, Culture, Identity* (2005), pp. 11-26.

272 Stella Bruzzi, *Undressing Cinema. Clothing and Identities in the Movies*. (London: Routledge, 1997).

273 For this phenomenon with historical films, see e.g. Pierre Sorlin, *The Film in History. Restaging the Past* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), and Robert A. Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past. The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).



Fig. 37. *Senso*
(Luchino Visconti
1954).

Girotti). The entire film is pervaded by theatricality, on- and offstage, and even on the battlefield. In the opening scene, the audience attending an opera reacts violently to the aria, ‘Di quella pira’, from Verdi’s *Il Trovatore* and Ussoni challenges the arrogant Austrian officer Mahler to a duel. The operatic narrative spreads from the stage to the auditorium, when Livia first meets Franz in the theatre box and says that she only loves theatre on the stage, and not as a real-life duel against her cousin. After that, she increasingly behaves like a tragic opera star: first coquettish during her nightly Venetian walk with Franz, then infatuated, becoming more and more desperate and hysterical, hiding him in her country villa and giving him the freedom fighters’ money, and ultimately vengeful and insane when he admits to being constantly unfaithful. Her costume is constantly adapted to these moods and situations.

Due to the use of colour, the chiaroscuro, the framing and image composition, the costumes’ colours and shapes, the beautiful ‘natural’ settings such as the opera house and the Venetian streets and alleys, the frescoed Palladian villa, and the landscapes during the war scenes, *Senso* has been considered Visconti’s most painterly film. In investigating Visconti’s relationship to painting, *Senso* appears to have stirred the most scholarly interest (see Introduction). Piero Tosi, responsible for *Senso*’s civilian and military costumes, said, ‘He [Visconti] had explained to me the idea of a nineteenth century of the Macchiaioli, an Italian Impressionism. I then went to the museums to become infused by the colours of Fattori and Lega’ (see Chapter 1 on Fattori and the Macchiaioli as sources for *Senso*).²⁷⁴ Tosi’s colleague Marcel Escoffier, however, would focus on a different kind of painting.

Rinventare: Tosi and Escoffier

Visconti and his crew’s appropriation of the visual arts become clear upon research into his collaborators’ practices. How did they work? For each – especially historical – film, Visconti’s set and costume designers scrupulously prepared the

²⁷⁴ Caterina D’Amico, Guido Vergani, *Piero Tosi. Costumi e scenografie* (Milano: Leonardo Arte, 1997), p. 14.

visual schema to cohere to the time and place in which the film was set. The documentation existed in photographs, paintings, prints, and drawings, and served as both historical guides and as a means of artistic inspiration. The crew strove to master the art and fashion of an era in order to create an original design. Visconti's collaborators called it *rinventare*: to reinvent.²⁷⁵ Thus, a banal and excessively literal and slavish quotation of paintings or prints was avoided. Set or costume designers composed new costumes or interiors without mimicking the originals, a tradition in film costume design that was essentially established in the 1930s by Gino Sensani, who influenced many followers. Film costumes had to be the expression of a time and a society, but also of the characters' psychology.²⁷⁶ Sensani's pupil was Maria De Matteis, who created the costumes for *Ossessione* and showed that designers could attire the poor as well as the rich.²⁷⁷ Her student was Piero Tosi, who from *Bellissima* onward designed the costumes for almost all of Visconti's films.

During and after the Second World War, Tosi attended the Florentine art academy where he studied painting with Ottone Rosai among others. He was initially impressed with Sensani's work for *Piccolo mondo antico* (1941) by Mario Soldati, but was also affected by films like *The Heiress* (1949) by William Wyler and Visconti's *La terra trema*.²⁷⁸ Via Franco Zeffirelli, who in the late 1940s and early 1950s often designed sets and costumes for Visconti's theatrical productions and was assistant-director on *La terra trema*, *Bellissima* and *Senso*, Tosi became third assistant to Maria de Matteis in Visconti's theatrical production of Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* (1949). After a few failed projects Tosi was about to start on Soldati's film *La provinciale* (1953), when Visconti seized him to design the sets and costumes for Goldoni's play *La locandiera* (1952). On Visconti's request, Tosi designed in the style of Giorgio Morandi and Pietro Longhi.²⁷⁹ Tosi's experience as a film costume designer was not extensive before he started on *Senso*, but he had even less experience with historical films. Yet Visconti entrusted him with the costume design for all supporting players and extras: an operation on a military scale, both in its preparation and on the set. Every morning Visconti personally inspected all the costumes of the farmers, citizens, and soldiers.

275 Interviews with Piero Tosi, 21 September 1984 and 14 April 2004, and with Tosi's former assistant, costume designer Vera Marzot, 29 September 1984 and 11 May 2004. On 16 November 2013, Tosi was given an honorary award for his whole career by the Academy of Motion Picture and Sciences.

276 Gino Sensani, 'Creature, non manichini', *Cinema* 8 (1936), p. 301, reprinted in: Mario Verdone ed., *La moda e il costume nel cinema* (Roma: Bianco e Nero, 1950), pp. 101-2. See also: Pier Marco De Santi, 'Suggestioni figurativi in "La viaccia" e "Metello" di Bolognini', in: De Franceschi (2003), pp. 117-32.

277 Stefano Masi, 'Il contributo dei direttori della fotografia e il ruolo di costumisti, scenografi e montatori', in Ernesto G. Laura ed., *Storia del cinema italiano VI* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2010), pp. 330-44.

278 Interview with Tosi, 14 April 2004. D'Amico/Vergani (1997), p. 9.

279 *La locandiera* is a play that is usually performed with lots of frills, lace, and monocles, but Visconti pushed this aside and produced a new, sober version. Instead he based himself on two painters, Pietro Longhi (1702-85) and Giorgio Morandi (1890-1964), the first an eighteenth-century Venetian genre painter, the second a twentieth-century Bolognese still life and landscape painter. Originally Visconti wanted Morandi himself to design the sets, but the now acclaimed and elderly artist refused. What did he know of theatre, as he had lived a retired life for many years with his two sisters in an old house in Bologna? So Tosi made sketches for the sets and costumes, which he submitted to Morandi when...

Tosi went even further than Sensani by dedicating more attention to the body's historical variations by insisting, for example, on corsets with the same hourglass waist as during the 1860s (*The Leopard*) or the 1890s (*L'innocente*), with all the attendant discomfort for the actresses.²⁸⁰ 'Of course', Tosi argues, 'there were film costume designers before me, but they were so-so. I've made sure that a bust got the right shape, a shape corresponding to the waist of a historic moment. In that I've gone beyond Sensani by establishing first the structure under the clothes and then recreating the waist. From there you could then create a character, with a detail, a little chain, a fan, etc., which respects the character, as well as fabrics that enhance the character'.²⁸¹

Tosi initially worked with the clothing company, SAFAS, which was led by two old Milanese ladies who had collaborated with Sensani – Emma and Giuditta Maggioni. They were somewhat conservative and railed against Tosi's corsets: '...an actress can never tolerate them!' A young assistant to the ladies, Umberto Tirelli, however, was eager to support Tosi and started buying original antique clothes. Tosi recalls, 'For me it was a revelation. Only by viewing original clothes, feeling the fabrics, and recognising the colours of a period did I understand what I had to do'.²⁸² When the ladies refused to accept Tirelli as a partner, he started his own company that would provide costumes for Visconti's films, theatre, and opera for years. Tosi and Tirelli were a team for decades. When asked his opinion on Visconti's reconstructions – his 'truth' – Tirelli responded that the reconstructions were not real but based on the truth: '*non vero, ma di verità*'. That is, they sought to convince by being based on the culture of a given period, including its painting. Visconti devised a film from one particular image. His approach, his *verità*, 'was not merely decorative, but had a message, that's why art from the represented time was used as a starting point'.²⁸³

...visiting him. Tosi had designed a scene with a grey sky backdrop while Visconti had wanted a blue sky. Visconti had also insisted on windows in the houses. But Morandi said: 'Finestre, no!' and wrote that on the sketch. Morandi told him also that the colour of the sky was always determined by the colour of the earth, and so the gray tones of the walls matched those in the air. Some compositions of groups of women in the genre scenes by Longhi look suspiciously like the bottles in the still lifes of Morandi. Tosi made such a combination of both, that he got the criticism that the ladies of *La locandiera* were just bottles. Their costumes were sober, without buttons, rotound as bottles and in the grey and pastel shades of Giorgio Morandi. Also, all objects on the tables were taken from Morandi's still lifes. Interview with Tosi, 21 September 1984.

280 Interviews with Tosi, 21 September 1984 and 14 April 2004. D'Amico/Vergani (1997).

281 Interview with Tosi, 14 April 2004.

282 Idem.

283 Interview with Umberto Tirelli, 9 October 1984. Tirelli's passion for collecting would result in one of the largest collections of historical, theatrical, and filmic costumes. Part of this is now preserved in the costume collection of the Palazzo Pitti in Florence. Tirelli, who started his own business in 1964, unfortunately died relatively young in 1990. The latest Tirelli costume exhibition was at Villa Pignatelli in Naples (June-July 2017). Before that, a large exhibiton was held in Palazzo Braschi in Rome in 2015. In 2014, when Tirelli Costumes existed 50 years, Skira released *Tirelli 50. Il guardaroba dei sogni*, edited by Masolino, Silvia and Caterina d'Amico and Dino Trappetti. Many exhibitions preceded the one in Naples, such as at Palazzo Attems Petzenstein in Gorizia, Metropolitan Museum in New York and the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris. See <http://www.tirelli-costumi.com/en/>. See also: Umberto Tirelli, Guido Vergani, *Vestire i sogni. Il lavoro, la vita, i segreti di un sarto teatrale* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1981).

For Tosi, nineteenth-century Naturalist painting was a popular source of inspiration because one could see how a dress hangs or folds, which light effects it could create, what kinds of fabric were used and how they looked, what colours or colour combinations were common, and what accessories belonged to certain costumes. All these elements were not especially well presented in contemporary encyclopedic fashion prints and magazine illustrations, which often rendered them flat and schematically. For the aristocrats' costumes in *Senso*, costume designer Marcel Escoffier and his colleague, Tosi, did not look to Macchiaioli painting, which represents the Italian middle class, but to representations of aristocrats in the paintings of such foreign artists as Franz-Xaver Winterhalter, Carolus-Duran, and Alfred Stevens.

Visconti had hired Escoffier to give Livia's costumes more of an international (read: French) allure. Escoffier was a pupil of the influential French set and costume designer Christian Bérard, who had designed the sets and costumes for Jean Cocteau's plays and films including *La belle et la bête* (1946), *L'aigle à deux têtes* (1948), and *Orphée* (1950). Prior to *Senso* Escoffier had designed the costumes for historical films such as *L'idiot* (Georges Lampin, 1946), *Rocambole* (Jacques de Baroncelli, 1948), *Violettes impériales* (Richard Pottier, 1952) – all set in the mid-nineteenth century – and *Le secret de Mayerling* (Jean Delannoy, 1949), about the suicide of the Austrian crown prince in 1889.²⁸⁴ Tosi contended that 'it was mainly because of *Le secret de Mayerling* that Visconti chose Escoffier. Visconti could have chosen Bérard, but the latter had too strong a personality while Escoffier was more modest. Moreover, Escoffier had experience with historical films'.²⁸⁵ Visconti already had collaborated with Escoffier prior to *Senso*, as the latter had designed the costumes for *Tre Sorelle* (1952), Visconti's stage version of Chekhov's *Three Sisters*.

International allure: Winterhalter and Carolus-Duran

The French contribution of Escoffier provided different pictorial influences, such as those of the nineteenth century elite portraitist *par excellence*: the South German painter Franz-Xaver Winterhalter (1805-1873). Winterhalter could not adapt to the nationalist monumental painting of Munich or the German avant-garde in Rome. He moved to Paris, broke through at the Salon and became a popular

284 According to his biographers, Visconti had plans in the 1930s to film the Mayerling affair himself. Visconti's cousin, Niki Arrivabene, told biographer Rondolino about a visit to Gustav Machaty in Winter 1935/1936, related to a plan to film the story. What is strange, however, is that Visconti wrote to his then fiancée, Irma 'Pupe' Windisch-Graetz on 21 March 1935, cited in Laurence Schifano, that he read the novel *Mayerling*, the then recent novel by Claude Anet (1930), and had disliked it. Still, Rondolino doesn't write that Visconti wanted to shoot the novel. The impossible love in aristocratic circles might have inspired Visconti, as Windisch-Graetz's father had also forbid her marriage to Visconti. Of the many adaptations of the affair the most famous one was Anatole Litvak's film *Mayerling*, based on Anet's novel and starring Charles Boyer and Daniele Darrieux. It premiered on 31 January 1936 and was a huge critical and commercial success. As the production had started in 1935, this must have been a major reason why neither Machaty nor Visconti pursued their plans. Much later, Visconti's *Ludwig* (1972) would approach the same material, not only through the characters but also in the historical vision of loss, denial, and self-destruction. Schifano, pp. 145-7, Rondolino (2006), pp. 52-3. For Escoffier, see <http://cinema.encyclopedie.personnalites.bifi.fr/index.php?pk=44712>.

285 Tosi to the author, 1 February 2007.



Fig. 38. Franz Xaver Winterhalter, *L'impératrice Eugénie entourée des dames d'honneur du palais* (1855). Château de Compiègne.

portrait painter for the French aristocracy. Louis-Philippe presented him to Queen Victoria, who became his biggest client and through whom all major European royal houses became his clients. Between 1850 and 1870, however, Winterhalter was predominantly the French Second Empire's court painter. His smooth, flattering portraits with their aura of confidence, glamour, and good upbringing gave him a reputation among Europe's rulers, whether the ancient nobility or such *nouveaux riches* as the Emperor Napoleon III himself. Political rivalries were no impediment – Winterhalter painted the French Emperor and his wife Eugénie as easily as the Austrian Emperor and his spouse, even though the two countries went to war over the Risorgimento in 1859.

The Empress Eugénie and her ladies had themselves immortalized both collectively and individually. The group portrait, *L'impératrice Eugénie entourée des dames d'honneur du palais* (*The Empress Eugénie surrounded by her ladies-in-waiting*, 1855), became world famous and is still seen in such derivative forms as lids of chocolate boxes, posters found in girls' bedrooms or book covers of Second Empire literature. The painting also represents an image of fashion that dominates the ball scene in *The Leopard* set in 1863. The painting, which was exhibited at the World Fair in 1855 where it won a prize, was initially the object of fierce criticism. Théophile Gautier felt that Winterhalter had been too busy with elegance and coquetry: 'Mr. Winterhalter has always sought favour and he often found her. His flirtatious and brilliant style resembles that of the English'.²⁸⁶ G. Planche, critic

286 Richard Ormond/Carol Blackett-Ord, *Franz-Xaver Winterhalter and the Courts of Europe, 1830-1870* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 1987), p. 203. This is the catalogue to the exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery in London and Musée du Petit Palais in Paris in 1987-8.

of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, characterized it as a parody of Watteau. He found the background much too vague, the ladies too lifeless and nothing seemed to be under those fantastic dresses.²⁸⁷

Queen Victoria thought that posterity would honour Winterhalter as a van Dyck of the nineteenth century. But history took a different turn. Already at his death in 1873 he was remembered mainly as a kind of court dignitary rather than as an artist. Apart from a memorial exhibition in that year, it was only in 1928 in Paris that a small and, in London eight years later, a larger exhibition of his work was staged.²⁸⁸ It then took more than fifty years until the former curator of the London National Gallery, Richard Ormond, organized a major retrospective in 1988 and published, *Franz-Xaver Winterhalter and the Courts of Europe*, the most authoritative study on Winterhalter to date. In short, when Visconti made *Senso* in 1953-1954, Winterhalter was a little-known painter whose art was not taken seriously and dismissed as cloying. On the other hand, no one else contributed as much as he did to the (self-) representation of the European aristocracy between 1830 and 1870.²⁸⁹

Winterhalter's portraits are far removed from those of the much cooler Ingres, like the two of Madame Moitessier, with their emphasis on the formal representation of the costume and the body, the light, bright colours, and the rigid pose simultaneously conveys nonchalance. In Winterhalter, chiaroscuro, movement, suggestion, and sensibility play a much larger role. It is clear that his portraits are more idealized than those of other contemporary French portrait painters, such as Paul Baudry's *Madeleine Rohan* (1860). On the other hand that portrait is constructed in just the same terms of pose and 'reality' as Ingres's *Mme Moitessier*.²⁹⁰

By the late 1860s French portrait painting developed a rather gloomy and somewhat rigorous presentation of characters and their costume, such as with Léon Bonnat and Carolus-Duran. Winterhalter also followed this trend. *La dame au gant* (1869) by Carolus-Duran (1837-1917) was a success at the Paris Salon for the representation of an elegant lady (Carolus's wife) dressed in black against a nearly bare wall, instead of the previous romantic settings characteristic of Winterhalter – settings that would influence many studio photographers and Italian portrait painters such as Cesare Tallone in his portrait of Queen Margherita (1890). Winterhalter and Carolus-Duran shared an emphasis on the psychology of their subjects' faces and a focus on the elegant, three-dimensional, and almost tactile costumes. The latter was also cited in Edith Wharton's novel *The Age of Innocence* (1920), 'Archer remembered, on his last visit to Paris, seeing a portrait by a new painter, Carolus-Duran, whose pictures were the sensation of the Salon, in which the lady wore one of these bold sheath-like robes with her chin nestling

287 The painting was personally paid for by the Empress Eugénie. Under Napoleon III's reign it hung in the castle of Fontainebleau, but was sent to Britain in 1881 to the exiled empress. After her death it was auctioned in 1927, entered the Musée national de Malmaison, and finally ended its wanderings at the Musée national du château de Compiègne, one of Napoleon III's former castles, in December 1952. Ormond/Blackett-Ord 1987, p. 203.

288 In 1928, this was at Galerie Jacques Seligmann et Fils in Paris, and at Knoedler's in London in 1936. See also <http://www.bvram.com/WH/ExhBib/Franz%20Xaver%20Winterhalter%20-%20Bibliography.pdf>.

289 Ormond/Blackett-Ord 1987, p. 8-9, 18-65.

290 Ibid., p. 58.

in fur'.²⁹¹ While Winterhalter's model had been the Flemish painter Anthonis van Dyck, Carolus-Duran's was the Spaniard Diego Velázquez. Stylistically, he was the bridge between such academic painters as Cabanel and Bouguereau, on the one hand, and Édouard Manet and the Impressionists on the other. During the 1870s and 1880s his paintings were present in all major European and American exhibitions and received many awards. His many society portraits would dominate the art world of the 1870s and 1880s. He was also one of the most popular teachers among Americans and Scandinavians, with many attending his Parisian workshop. Through him painters such as John Singer Sargent would take over Winterhalter's legacy, and the style of the Second Empire would be transferred to the Belle Époque.

Less is known about Winterhalter's direct influence on his contemporaries. His greatest imitator was the French society painter, Édouard Dubufe, who also completed portraits of the Empress Eugénie. In Britain Winterhalter's influence can be seen in early Frederick Leighton. German artists like Richard Lauchert and Heinrich von Angeli worked in Winterhalter's style and built international careers. Von Angeli's work includes portraits of Victoria (Vicky) of Prussia, sister of Queen Victoria and wife of the shortlived German Emperor Friedrich III. The real German successor to Winterhalter, however, was Franz von Lenbach who painted portraits of Wagner and his Cosima but also of the German Emperor Wilhelm I, his son, and his grandson.²⁹²

Livia's opera dress and its accessories in *Senso* immediately recall Winterhalter. Visconti and Escoffier, who designed Alida Valli's wardrobe, must have studied Winterhalter's portraits, especially that of the Austrian Empress Elisabeth (Sisi), now at the Sisi-Museum within the Hofburg in Vienna. In *Senso*'s opening scene at La Fenice, Livia wears the same stars in her hair and the same large transparent tulle scarf. When asked about the inspiration, Tosi first downplayed before acknowledging the painting's role, 'It was indeed that time, but those references come naturally'. Pressed further about the stars in Livia's hair, he replied, 'that well, that was indeed Winterhalter. That was an idea of Marcel Escoffier [...] Of course at that time neither stars nor actresses dictated the fashion. Those were the queens. *They* were the first stars'.²⁹³ Livia's Austrian 'touch' well befits the collaboration of the Venetian upper classes with the Austrian occupiers despite her revolutionary ideas. At the same time, Paris dictated fashion European-wide, so Livia's outfit is a mixture of Charles Worth-like high fashion with hints of aristocratic Austria.

In the autumn of 1864 Winterhalter painted two official portraits of Franz Joseph and Elisabeth, alongside two other portraits of her, one with her hair done up and the other with her hair loose.²⁹⁴ On Elisabeth's immense (255 cm x 133 cm) official portrait, signed and dated 1865 (though painted a year earlier), her famous

291 Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence*, (1920; New York: reprint McMillan, 1987), p. 104. For a long time Carolus-Duran was a forgotten painter, from the turn of the century until the 1970s. In Lille, Musée des Beaux-Arts, March-May 2003, and Toulouse, Musée des Augustins, June-September 2003, a large exhibition was dedicated to his work by Annie Scottez-De Wambrechies and Alain Daguerre de Hureaux. Annie Scottez-De Wambrechies ed., *Carolus-Duran 1837-1917* (Paris: Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 2003).

292 Ormond/Blackett-Ord 1987, pp. 58-9.

293 Interview with Tosi, 14 April 2004.

294 Ormond/Blackett-Ord 1987, p. 217, cat. 79.



Fig. 39. Franz Xaver Winterhalter, *Kaiserin Elisabeth im Galakleid mit diamantbesetzten Sternen im Haar* (1865). Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

long hair is wound into strands and tied to the top of her head, creating a sort of natural diadem. Her hair is decorated with diamond stars, designed by the Viennese court jeweller Kochert (just as Livia's is, as if she were following Austrian aristocratic fashion). Sisi wears a white satin and tulle crinoline decorated with silver foil stars draped in a big tulle veil. In the 1860s, the French fashion designer Charles Worth created a rage with tulle and glitter. Elisabeth's shoulders and upper back are exposed. Around her neck she wears either a locket or necklace. She looks back over her left shoulder at the viewer, throwing a faint smile and holds a fan. The lower part of her dress stands in the shade. The focus is on the opulence of her costume, the crinoline occupying two-thirds of the painting. Sisi is painted against a rather meaningless background. To her right are two columns and a thriving oleander, which could refer to the Greek island of Corfu, where she frequently stayed, though the stately columns also resemble the pendant portrait of Franz Joseph and could therefore refer to the Hofburg itself. Finally, this is also a generalized romantic setting, similar to many of Winterhalter's female portraits and reminiscent of those from earlier centuries by Winterhalter's great forerunner, van Dyck.

When comparing photos of Winterhalter's subjects, it is quite evident that he idealized his clients' portraits. Queen Victoria no longer has her little pug face, the overweight Queen Isabella of Spain has been slimmed down. Yet, the quality and colours of the crinolines, the folds of the dresses, and the accessories are all readily apparent – you get a three-dimensional and almost tactile suggestion of the era's *haute couture*. In *Senso*, Count Serpieri with his big head and whiskers, just like those of the

generals at the film's beginning and end, seem inspired by photos of Franz Joseph, as well as such painted portraits as those by Winterhalter, formerly at the Hofburg.²⁹⁵ Narratively, it matches the Count's opportunistic adherence to Austrian dominion. Yet large sideburns were popular in most European countries in the mid-nineteenth century, as international photography shows, and thus we should not blithely assume a simple one-to-one correspondence between Serpieri and the Austrian Emperor.

Livia's dress, moreover, does not completely match Winterhalter's portrait of Empress Elisabeth. In *Senso's* opera scene, Alida Valli wears a dark blue dress that wraps the shoulders and cleavage with pink silk adorned with sequins, placing bows on the shoulders and with deliberate folds to accentuate the *décolleté*. She wears no jewels, this being the most normal thing in the world of rich, mature ladies of the 1860s. According to Tosi, it was felt that jewelry combined with the stars in Livia's hair would have been overkill. You would also expect long opera gloves instead of the short ones she is wearing. Tosi nevertheless indicated that between about 1825 and 1870 opera gloves were not particularly long and, around 1840, were even extremely short – an often forgotten detail. One can see this on such paintings as *Lady in Yellow/Remember* (1863) by Alfred Stevens or *La dame au gant* by Carolus-Duran in which the woman depicted is wearing short gloves (lying on the ground). Thus, Lampedusa made a mistake in *The Leopard* when he wrote about Angelica's long gloves during the 1863 ball.²⁹⁶

Furthermore, the style of Livia's dress is as much reminiscent of 1950s fashions as of the 1860s – as much Dior, Balenciaga, and Balmain as Worth. Around 1950 Balenciaga designed ball gowns with huge bows like the one Valli wears. This confirms a general observation about historical films: that they express as much the time in which they were created as the eras they represent.

The elite's apparel: Alfred Stevens

Besides Winterhalter's official paintings, Visconti's costume designers were also inspired by French Naturalist genre painting. Visconti asked Escoffier to look at the long forgotten painter 'Stevenson', as Tosi initially called him, referring to the Belgian painter Alfred Stevens. 'Is he a Belgian?' Tosi asked incredulously during an interview. 'I thought he was a Brit!'²⁹⁷ He continued, 'I had a brilliant monograph but it was stolen from me, or I have lent it and lost it. Unfortunately, a painter who has left no trace, there is no monograph. There are still some paintings. I remember a portrait in Palazzo Pitti, in the Nineteenth Century section, a red drawing room with a lady dressed in black'.²⁹⁸

295 Ibid., p. 152, cat. 78.

296 Tosi to the author, 1 February 2007. Lampedusa 2007, p. 166.

297 There is indeed a British Alfred Stevens but he was primarily a sculptor.

298 The Galleria d'Arte Moderna of Palazzo Pitti in Florence, however, claims to have no work of Stevens in their possession. Galleria d'Arte Moderna to the author, 5 August 2005. In the meantime an...



Fig. 40 (left). Alfred Stevens, *La lettre de faire-part* (before 1863). Location unknown.

Fig. 41 (right). Alfred Stevens, *Departing for the Promenade (Will You Go Out with Me, Fido?)* (1859). Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Alfred Stevens (1823-1906), ‘*maître de la vie amoureuse*’, was beloved as the painter of the fashionable Paris of the 1860s and 1870s.²⁹⁹ In the 1860s he introduced into genre painting the theme of the sentimental life of young bourgeois women. He painted a portrait that, ever since *Senso*’s initial release, has been put forward as an inspiration for one of Livia’s costumes, especially in a special issue on the film by the Italian film magazine, *Cinema*. The painting is titled, *La lettre de faire part*, and also, *La rentrée* and *The Announcement* (probably before 1863).³⁰⁰ Though difficult to ascertain, Visconti seems to have used it for the costume that Livia wears when visiting Franz in Verona.³⁰¹ The only element that resembles the movie costume appears to be her veiled hat. The large cashmere shawl that Stevens’s

...excellent monograph on Stevens has appeared: Christiane Lefebvre, *Alfred Stevens* (Paris: Brame & Lorenceau, 2006). The Musée des Beaux-Arts in Brussels and the Van Gogh Museum (Amsterdam) organized an impressive exhibition in 2009, during which appeared the catalogue *Alfred Stevens Brussel-Parijs 1823-1906* (Brussels: Mercatorfonds, 2009).

299 Stevens must have undoubtedly been a good source for costume designer Gabriela Pescucci – who started her career with Tosi during Pasolini’s *Medea* (1969) and Visconti’s *Death in Venice* (1971) – for her costumes for Martin Scorsese’s *The Age of Innocence* (1993). Janet Patterson’s costumes in Jane Campion’s *The Portrait of a Lady* (1996) also demonstrate Stevens’s influence. Stevens’s realist depiction of women’s clothes was, in turn, inspired by such seventeenth-century painters as Gerard Ter Borch and Johannes Vermeer.

300 Piero Tosi, ‘Costume come vita’, *Cinema* 136 (June 1954), pp. 359-61. Interview with Piero Tosi, 21 September 1984. The painting was formerly in the Collection Wolff in Brussels. In the 2009 Stevens catalogue its location is indicated as unknown. *Alfred Stevens* (2009), p. 161. See also Gary Tinterow, Henri Loyrette, *Origins of Impressionism* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art/ Harry E. Abrams, 1994), p. 276.

301 William Coles, *Alfred Stevens* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Museum, 1977), p. 12-13. This was an exhibition catalogue with a monographic exhibition at Ann Arbor (University of Michigan Museum), Baltimore (Walters Art Gallery) and Montréal (Musée des Beaux-Arts) in 1977-8.



Fig. 42. *Senso* (Luchino Visconti 1954).

woman wears is more reminiscent of the scene where Livia is wrapped in just such a shawl, walking around her villa. Such cashmere scarves were in fashion beginning around 1856, as Stevens's paintings reveal, such as *Departing for the Promenade/ Will You Go Out with Me, Fido?! La femme au chien* (1859, Philadelphia Museum of Art) and *La visite/En visite* (1857, Bergen/ Mons, collection Dehaut).³⁰² François Monod waxed lyrical about Stevens's cashmere shawls:

He is the one [Stevens] who has preserved the glory, so unfortunately forgotten, of cashmeres, unfolded like fairy plumages, with a background of vermilion, white, sulfur, azure, orange, plum, or emerald colors, with their subtle medallion border of decorated feathers. He enshrines them in his masterpieces. He enhances their bright and precious mosaic by contrasting them to severe, one-colored dresses, made of silk or velvet, kept in a warm and simple tone...³⁰³

In 1954 Visconti gave Tosi *Les peintres de la vie familiale* (1945) by Louis Hautecoeur (see Chapters 2 and 3), that focuses almost exclusively on French art and discusses extensively the nineteenth century family portrait.³⁰⁴ Visconti wrote at the front of the book a personal note to Tosi: '*A Pierino carissimo, un ricordo da quella Parigi che continua a voler ignorare. Luchino V. Parigi 1954*' (To my dear

302 Coles 1977, p. 8-9.

303 Ibid., p. 9. François Monod, *Un peintre des femmes du Second Empire. Alfred Stevens* (Evreux 1909), p. 15. For the cashmere shawls of the nineteenth century and their social status, see Danielle Derrey-Capon, 'Burgerlijk exotisme. Hoe een dame te enceneren', in *Alfred Stevens* 2009, p. 164.

304 Hautecoeur 1945. The book is now part of the Fondo Visconti, Fondazione Gramsci, Rome. Giovanna Bosman (Fondazione Gramsci) indicated that the book came out of Visconti's own estate and was not a donation by Tosi.

Piero, a souvenir of that Paris which he keeps wishing to ignore).³⁰⁵ Given its heavily damaged state – the spine is missing – the book appears to have been well used. Hautecoeur called attention to the watercolourists and lesser masters of such nineteenth-century movements as Romanticism (Devéria, Eugène Lami), Realism (Millet, Cals, Bonvin), Naturalism (J.E. Blanche, Forain) and Impressionism (Besnard) because the family portrait emerges as a theme in their work. The great romantic painters, for example, refused to portray normal daily family life, believing that painting should not function as mere inventory or observation. Hautecoeur cites Baudelaire, who wrote in his ‘Salon de 1846’:

There are two ways to understand the portrait: the history and the novel. One is to faithfully, strictly, carefully render the outline and the shape of the model, which does not exclude idealisation, which for the discerning naturalist means to select the most characteristic attitude [...] The second method, i.e., particularly the one of the colourists, is to make a painting, a poem, with its accessories full of space and reverie. Here art is more difficult to obtain, because it is more ambitious [...] Here the imagination has a larger share, and yet, as it often happens that the novel is truer than history, it also happens that this model is most clearly expressed by the abundant and easy brush rather than by the pencil of the artist. [...] It is therefore not with the great Romantics to look for a representation of family. It is rather found in watercolourists or in painters without a strong personality.³⁰⁶

In his discussion of the realistic family portrait, Hautecoeur stands up for the work of Stevens, especially in their themes and anecdotes:

Sometimes Alfred Stevens is classified among the realists. Certainly, this Belgian turned Parisian faithfully observes the women’s fashions, the interiors of his time, the details of everyday life, but when naturalists are fixed on observing reality in a ‘scientific and impassive’ way, Stevens has never hidden his curiosity or sympathy for his models, has never stopped to express their sorrows or joys, sometimes even suggesting a novella. He is well connected to the [French] painters of the eighteenth century through Boilly and to the Dutch and Flemish small master painters through Willems. Stevens enjoyed the favour of the Parisian society of the Second Empire without ever falling into the sentimentality or mannerism of a Toulmouche. We must, however, admit that he has rubbed shoulders with that sometimes, but his titles even more than his works are pervaded by literature. Stevens lets you guess what all these letters contain that the women read, we know they bring bad news, a cruel certainty, or they evoke memories and regrets. When they are young girls, they are thinking about love. When married, they live in their boudoir, while the husband works elsewhere, perpetually absent. They exchange confidences, talk about their dresses, their hats, their house crammed with poufs, oriental rugs and Chinese trinkets. When they’re mothers, they receive their lady friends at their childbed, feed their babies and possess all happiness. Then the

305 Tosi disliked international travel, though he would travel to Paris and the rest of France for his research on Visconti’s Proust project.

306 Hautecoeur 1945, p. 116, 120.

child grows, and his mother calls him to show him to her friends. This taste of the anecdote, a legacy of the eighteenth century and Northern painting, provided mundane success to Stevens. We will not find this among the naturalists.³⁰⁷

Why did Visconti think of Stevens? Tosi responds:

...Stevens was a painter from the time shortly before Boldini, and also a little before Sargent. Stevens is a painter who painted many ladies' portraits. The costume is very precise at that time, the costume of the years 1860, 1862, 1865, that transition time of large crinoline to 1870. All the women in Stevens have the strange look of that time, those nearly unstructured, different costumes. Visconti wanted Livia Serpieri not to wear a costume that was too ordinary for that time, it could not be provincial.³⁰⁸

In *Senso*, Escoffier and Tosi considered neither the Macchiaioli nor the Barbizon School for the nobility's costumes, although others believed they did – Silvestro Lega, for one, was cited by various critics. The costume designers instead looked at more aristocratic paintings for Livia's costumes because she was of a different class, that of the Venetian aristocracy, according to Tosi:

Not so much Lega as rather Stevens, and that is something quite different. For example, when she goes to visit the officers, she is dressed excessively, in a dress with neo-Gothic forms on her jacket, and a huge bow on the back of her dress. It is not as quiet as in Lega. It is actually very outlandish.³⁰⁹

Those 'neo-Gothic forms' come back repeatedly in Livia's clothes: in the dark stripes of her cloak's ornaments when she looks for Franz at the Fondation Nuove; in the large black accents on her dress when she goes to the Arsenal; in the dress she wears when she notes that her husband is leaving Venice; and in the dressing gown with the giant cuffs she wears in her villa. The work of Édouard Manet should also be mentioned here. When Livia rushes to her lover, she wears a violet dress surmounted by a short jacket, entirely in keeping with the fashions of the 1860s. This combination of a light purple dress with jacket with a black profile through dark trims is seen in two of Manet's paintings: *Aux Courses d'Auteuil* (Women at the Races, 1865) and *La Chanteuse de Rues* (Street Singer, c.1862). In the latter, we are dealing with the impoverished woman rather than an aristocrat à la Visconti, yet the resemblance in the dress is there.³¹⁰

With all its folds, cords, and tassels, the mantle Livia wears when leaving the opera is quite dramatic and reminiscent of the opera singer's stage dress, which also contains fake creases, cords, and other notable accents. Even the English plaid skirt with the tight white blouse that Livia wears when giving the partisans' money to Franz seems quite ordinary and even businesslike, though it still makes a powerful statement through the big black bow topped with a huge medallion on the top of the blouse. Later in her villa's garden Livia wears another typical plaid skirt while watching the war and walking under a gallery. She wraps herself in a huge,

307 Ibid., p. 128.

308 Interview with Tosi, 14 April 2004.

309 Ibid.

310 Mark also the matching gloves and little umbrella in Manet's *Woman at the Races* and in *Senso*.



Fig. 43. *Senso* (Luchino Visconti 1954).



Fig. 44 (left). Édouard Manet, *Women at the Races* (1865). Cincinnati Art Museum.



Fig. 45 (right). Édouard Manet, *Street Singer* (c. 1862). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

clinging, cashmere scarf. The scarf serves as a metaphor, as if she cannot defend herself against both the cold and the impending threat of war (see above, for a comparison with Stevens's shawls).

In short, Livia's theatrical clothing literally embodies Visconti's deliberate strategy to force the viewers to look at her by using striking, contrasting details. This is hardly a mere historical reconstruction. As Tosi previously indicated, the costume has a primarily narrative function – to express her character. There are only a few scenes in which she does not wear such theatrical accents: the nightly walk with Franz by Venice, in which she sports a tilted, typical hunting or musketeer hat which was fashionable around 1860 and was called an *Eugénie hat*, after the French Empress. At the same time, this costume can also be indicative of the calm before the storm when Livia still retains her self-possession. When opera, Franz, and her unbridled passion take over, her apparel will reflect this (for the frequent use of veils for Livia in *Senso*, see Chapter 6).

The mantle of La Castiglione

When talking to Tosi about the inspirations for Valli's clothes in *Senso*, he indicated that not only painting, but also photography, played a key role:

The story of her last costume, the one of her trip [to Verona], is bizarre. I myself was in love with a mantle of la Castiglione. There are many pictures of Castiglione with a cloak like a burnous, draped over her shoulders, with black objects on it. I had designed it as something general, and I had already dressed an extra at La Fenice in it [in the scene where] when they throw down the handbills. There is then a shot of a corridor where people flee, among whom a lady with a cloak, with that burnous, [is seen] fleeing through the corridor of La Fenice. When we filmed the departure of Alida [Valli], in long shot – she comes out of the door, steps into the carriage, and exits the gate in the coach towards the dawn or the sunset, you can not see well – she wears a cloak that was created by Escoffier. That was a more bourgeois, heavy cloak of dark cloth with frills and chenille, but tight, a kind of brocade. After we had done the shooting, Visconti has said: 'I want the mantle of Castiglione [for Valli]'. I said, 'But we have already shot it?' Visconti persisted. Indeed, it was a cloak that offered more drama.³¹¹

Virginia Oldoini, wife of the Count di Castiglione, was one of the most famous women of the Second Empire. Prime Minister Camillo Cavour of Piedmont managed to convince her to use all of her means to move Napoleon III to support the Piedmontese in their war against the Austrians, the ultimate goal of which was the unification of Italy under their king, Victor Emmanuel II. The Countess had a yearlong affair with the French emperor in 1856-7, but was banned from France after he took a new mistress and survived a failed assassination attempt by some Italians. She divorced her husband, whom she had financially ruined by her extravagance and who was tired of her infidelity. After languishing several years in Turin, she returned to Paris in 1861 where she resumed her life as a *femme fatale*

311 Interview with Tosi, 14 April 2004.



Fig. 46 (above).
Senso (Luchino
 Visconti 1954).



Fig. 47 (right).
 Pierre-Louis
 Pierson, *Alta*
 (1863-1866).
 Musée d'Orsay,
 Paris.

though this time under financial distress. Castiglione had herself photographed endlessly by the photographer Pierre-Louis Pierson (1822-1913), one of her neighbors in the elite neighbourhood of Passy. After the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1 she no longer played an important role and spent the rest of her life obsessing over her faded beauty.

After her death in 1899, Robert de Montesquiou – the model for Charlus in Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* and known for his portraits by Whistler and Boldini – bought most of her photos at an auction at Drouot in 1901. He ultimately collected 434 of them. Montesquiou was completely captivated by

her and published *La Divine Comtesse* in 1913, the third such book about her, after a fictional biography by Henri Regnier in 1901-10 and a non-fiction version by Frédéric Loliée in 1912. In the 1920s Castiglione was an inspiration for the eccentric heiress and art patroness Marchesa Casati and for a French musical by Régis Gignoux with music by Jacques Ibert.³¹² When preparing herself for the role, the actress Ganna Walska acquired many of Montesquiou's pictures, and they eventually ended up at the Metropolitan Museum in New York in 1975.

As early as 1900 the photos of Castiglione appeared in books and magazines to illustrate Second Empire fashion. Only in the 1980s was serious attention drawn to the artistic qualities of Castiglione's staged photographs. It became clear only then that the pictures, which were previously attributed to Adolphe Braun (who had bought the case containing them), were really Pierson's. His most famous photograph is *Scherzo di Follia* (1863-1866), in which the countess keeps an empty, oval shaped cardboard picture frame in front of her eye, through which she gazes at the spectator. Because of the framing, all the attention focuses on her one eye, making the picture slightly voyeuristic and giving it a timeless character.

'La Divine Comtesse'. Photographs of the Countess de Castiglione (2000) by Pierre Apraxine and Xavier Demange shows that at the time of *Senso's* production, Castiglione was again in the spotlight.³¹³ In 1951 a new auction of her objects and archives at Drouot resulted in the monograph, *La Castiglione. Dame de Coeur de l'Europe* (1953) by Alain Decaux. For the book's launch, the editors advertised by photographing the interior of Castiglione's Parisian house with the actress Pier Angeli, who was to have played her in a film by Decaux (never produced). In September 1954, soon after *Senso's* premiere at the Venice Film Festival, a French production, *La contessa di Castiglione*, directed by George Combret and starring Yvonne de Carlo, came out in France. Visconti, Escoffier, and Tosi might have been aware of this through publicity during the French film's preproduction.³¹⁴ Escoffier may also have known Castiglione through another channel. In 1930, the set and costume designer Christian Bérard, Escoffier's tutor, gathered a collection of eighteen Pierson photographs of her in an album, *Madame de Castiglione*. Bérard designed the cover himself.³¹⁵

After this extensive exposure, Visconti and his designers most likely had a wide range of material about Castiglione at their disposal. But luck sometimes plays a greater role than we think. Tosi claims that he saw neither Decaux's book nor any others at that time, but had found an album in a flea market that contained a photo of Castiglione in profile, dressed in the aforementioned burnous. On basis of this, he designed the mantle that both the extra in the opera scene and Valli would wear.

312 Gioia Mori ed., *La divina marchesa. Arte e vita di Luisa Casati dalla Belle Époque agli Anni folli* (Milan: 24 ORE Cultura, 2014). This is the catalogue to the homonymous exhibition at Palazzo Fortuny, Venice (October 2014-March 2015), in which references to La Castiglione were made as well.

313 Pierre Apraxine, Xavier Demange, *'La Divine Comtesse'. Photographs of the Countess de Castiglione* (New Haven: Yale University Press/New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000).

314 In 1942 Flavio Calzavara directed the film *La Contessa Castiglione* with Doris Duranti as the Countess and costumes by Gino Sensani. These costumes still exist. Tosi had heard about the film when working on *Senso*, but hadn't seen it. Tosi to the author, 1 February 2007.

315 After Bérard's death in 1949 it was initially owned by Boris Kochno. Since 2008 it has been in the collection of the Musée d'Orsay who purchased it from Richard Avedon. <http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/actualites/conferen/albanel/dpcastiglione.pdf>.

Incidentally, he regularly consulted this album for his creative inspiration though it was later unfortunately stolen.³¹⁶

In the book of Apraxine and Demange, Castiglione is depicted wearing a dramatic mantle in two photos.³¹⁷ In *Alta* (1863-1866, cat. no. 56 of Apraxine/ Demange), she wears a huge opera mantle with fringe and drag over a large crinoline that, following the fashion of the 1860s, is longer from behind than at the front. She wears the typical *Eugénie hat*, a musketeer hat with white plume – similar to that worn by Valli in *Senso* – and her hair is powdered white in front, giving the ensemble a rather eighteenth-century impression. Indeed a great fondness for the era of Marie Antoinette pervaded the Second Empire. Both Castiglione and the Empress Eugénie had themselves portrayed as the unfortunate queen in photographs and paintings. In *Alta*, Castiglione also stands on a stool to appear larger and more consistent with the fashion prints of her time. The theatrical motif of the Countess's mantle and dress is echoed by the curtains behind her, creating an operatic atmosphere like that both of *Senso's* female opera singer who wears a dress with artificial folds and who is framed by a (fake) curtain and of Livia's own – theatrical – mantle when she returns home after the opera.

In the photo *Funeral* (1861-1865, cat.no. 49 of Apraxine & Demange), Castiglione is wearing a huge cloak over her crinoline but which appears less opulent. She wears an upright hat that contrasts with the flat small one with the large black veil and beaded fringe that Valli wears in *Senso's* final scene – the latter recalls the woman in Stevens's *La lettre de faire part*. The Apraxine & Demange photos do not reveal such a veiled hat. Moreover, it is not only in the Winterhalter portrait of Elisabeth of Austria that a woman has stars in her hair, Pierson also dressed Castiglione in the same manner when posing her as Mozart's Queen of the Night in his photographs from 1863-1867.³¹⁸

Armand Roulin's hat

It was not only Winterhalter's *arrière-garde*, Stevens's naturalism or Pierson's artistic photography that influenced *Senso's* costume design. According to Tosi, in addition to the painterly citations of Hayez and Signorini (see Chapter 1), a third was inserted into the film: a portrait by Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890):

Something that has always vexed us was Visconti's obsession with hats and kepis. He was, moreover, quite right. The screen often fixates on the face, so everything has to be perfect there. I often tell my students: you may be imprecise everywhere, but with the head all the details and all the forms you've got to be right. For the hat Massimo Girotti [the freedom fighter Roberto Ussoni] wears when he crosses through the violence of war on a horse and carriage, Visconti wanted him to wear it just like on the portrait of Armand Roulin by van Gogh. That was quite an operation, because it [the hat] was a painterly interpretation, in bright yellow. It

316 Tosi to the author, 1 February 2007.

317 Apraxine/ Demange 2000, p. 32, ill. 11, and p. 135, cat. 56.

318 Depicted in Apraxine/ Demange is also *Fright*, a study for a painting of one Aquilin Schad – who worked for Pierson – and now considered lost. A woman in a huge crinoline of white satin is fleeing a fire in the background. Tosi would have used *Fright* for a sketch of the ball gown of Claudia Cardinale in *The Leopard*. Françoise Heilbrun, 'The posthumous life', in Apraxine/Demange 2000, p. 85.

would be a straw hat, though straw never has that intensity. Besides, it would be impossible to make it as in van Gogh's painting; it would be absurd too because of the completely different pictorial vision of the film. So it became my obsession to give Visconti only the *shape* of the hat. Of course it remained a straw hat with a ribbon.... an abstraction of the painting's colours. It was never the same and what came out was finally accepted. But I remember well Visconti's fixation on that hat, how it had to be like the hat of Armand Roulin by van Gogh, which he made clear to me by a reproduction. By the way, [it is] a beautiful painting and not just the hat.³¹⁹

Van Gogh painted Roulin twice but both times his straw hat is *not* yellow. In the version at Museum Folkwang in Essen (1888), the seventeen-year-old son of the postal clerk, Joseph Roulin, is painted *en face*, the straw hat in black and grey-blue. Only Roulin's jacket is bright yellow, its folds are indicated with light green paint. Also, the background is a green that is almost the same as the folds. In the version *en profile* in Museum Boijmans in Rotterdam (1888), Roulin is wearing a jacket that is just as purple blue as his hat. Now his sad face is ochreous. During the period he lived in Paris, van Gogh did paint some self-portraits in which he wears a yellow straw hat – for example, the *Self Portrait with Straw Hat* from 1887 (Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam) and *Self-Portrait with Straw Hat* from 1888 (Metropolitan Museum, New York). On some self-portraits the hat is indeed bright yellow, which has led to the similarly coloured hat that actor Kirk Douglas wears in *Lust for Life* (Vincente Minnelli, 1956). Since *Lust for Life* was made after *Senso*, Visconti could not have drawn inspiration there.

During *Senso*'s production, van Gogh's name might well have been in the air since the first Italian exhibition of his work had been organized at Milan's Palazzo Reale in 1952. As many as 125 works were on display including sixty pieces from the Kröller-Müller Museum in Otterlo.³²⁰ A. Hammacher, the museum's director and the driving force behind the exhibition, publicly expressed his satisfaction with the exhibition's architect, Luciano Baldessari, who adapted the palace's large rooms to the relatively small sizes of van Gogh's work, directing all the attention to the paintings.³²¹ Nevertheless, neither of the two versions of *Armand Roulin* was present, only the portrait of his postman father. When Visconti and Tosi were preparing *Senso*, both versions had been already acquired by the aforementioned museums, the Rotterdam version was purchased in 1939 and the Essen in 1922. While we cannot know if Visconti went to Essen or Rotterdam before 1954, he might have known the paintings through catalogues and exhibitions. The portrait in Essen's Museum Folkwang must have appealed deeply to him as it returned in

319 Interview with Tosi, 14 April 2004. In 2007 Tosi told me it was an enormous operation to have the new hat look old and worn, not in the least because of Visconti's fixations on hats. Every morning during the production, the director personally inspected all of the actors's headgear. Tosi to the author, 1 February 2007.

320 *Van Gogh. Dipinti e disegni. Catalogo. Milano, Palazzo Reale. Febbraio-aprile 1952* (Milano: Ente manifestazioni milanesi/ Amilcare Pizzi S.A., 1952).

321 A. Hammacher, 'Opmerkelijke Van Gogh-tentoonstelling in Palazzo Reale -Milaan', *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 5 April 1952. See also 'Vincent de Verschrikkelijke'. Sensatie in de kranten en zeer veel bezoekers. 125 Van Goghs in Rome', *De Tijd*, 18 March 1952.



Fig. 48 (left). Vincent van Gogh, *Portrait of Armand Roulin* (1888). Museum Folkwang, Essen. Fig. 49 (right). *Senso* (Luchino Visconti 1954).

a later film. In *Rocco and His Brothers*, when Simone is seduced by Morini, a copy hangs on the wall of Morini's house (see Chapter 4).

When *Senso* was released in 1954, critics paid little attention to the pictorial relationships to Winterhalter or Stevens, focusing instead on those with the Macchiaioli. Yet, the latter only account for part of the film's visual scheme – the war scenes and the representation of household staff and farmers. The critics' failure to recognize those other pictorial ties is likely due to the limits of their aesthetic appreciation. In the decades that Visconti made his historical films – from the 1950s to the 1970s – a historiographical development took place that must have been vital for his and his crew's historical and aesthetic inspiration as well as for the contemporary reception of his films. In the 1950s and 1960s, nineteenth century academic and genre painters were hardly *bon ton*, even though they had been extremely popular in their own time. Their revaluation would only begin in the 1970s. In addition, Italian critics often took an Italo-centric rather than an international perspective. This explains why although Italian film criticism and film history has always made a strong point of relating Visconti's film aesthetics in *Senso* to painting, it has focused on *Italian* painting and, more specifically, on the canon of the Macchiaioli established by Italian art historians. After interviewing Tosi and revisiting the films themselves, it is quite apparent that Visconti's crew, led by the maestro himself, borrowed from an international range of paintings. In the nineteenth century this was usually not the *avant-garde*, but rather the *arrière-garde* of the official portrait, or the Baudelairean painters of *il faut être de son temps* (and therefore contemporary without being *avant-garde* – modern but not modernist). Painters such as Winterhalter, Stevens, and Carolus-Duran were thus the main inspirations for *Senso's* costumes. Through the pictures of the Countess de Castiglione, moreover, photography played an important contributory role as well – photos like that of Hayez's *Bacio* or Greuze's *Fils puni* have had *their* journey through time and *their* reception history. Again, the creation of canons and hierarchies in the arts has obstructed the recognition and acknowledgement

of the richness of Visconti's aesthetic inspirations. With such recent shifts in art history *and* in film history as decanonisation and letting go of *avant-garde* and modernism as teleological, guiding principles, there is space to look differently at the pictorial influences in film. Oral history, previously controversial and unrecognized within the disciplines, has been accepted since the groundbreaking work of such scholars as Paul Thompson³²², and has enabled us to take in a fuller panorama of – especially indirect – pictorial links in *Senso*, Visconti's most pictorial film. Coming back to Church Gibson, we can conclude that, while partly justified by the *mise en scène*, in the film's theatricality that was partly appropriated from Castiglione's dresses and their photographic staging, costume in *Senso* serves not only a narrative function, but also embodies taste, that of Visconti – a man highly fascinated with and obsessed by costume – and of his collaborators as much as that of its historical era.³²³ Let us now analyse how film costumes have been treated in Visconti's entire film oeuvre by focusing on one specific theme, that of veiling and unveiling. We will again see painterly appropriations and roots, but as with Greuze and Lampedusa, Mann, Praz's study *Conversation Pieces*, or photography, the appropriation also involves the intermediate stage of literary referencing. And this time sculpture also plays an important part.

322 Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

323 Apart from self produced home movies, (unfinished) amateur film projects, and attempts to work with Gabriel Pascal and Gustav Machaty, Visconti started his professional film career as a costume and props assistant during his internship at Jean Renoir's film *Une partie de campagne* (1936). See Rondolino 2000, pp. 53-65. See also Chapter 7, note 405, and Chapter 8, note 450, for references to primary and secondary sources. In all of his stage and screen productions, Visconti would often personally interfere with the costume design.

Costume: Veiling, Unveiling and Revealing with Visconti

In Visconti's final film, *L'innocente*, while Giuliana Hermil dresses for a rendezvous with her lover, the writer Filippo d'Arborio, her husband, Tullio, hears her singing the aria, 'Che farò senza Euridice', from *Orfeo e Euridice* (1762) by Christoph Willibald von Gluck. She had previously heard this aria at a concert when Filippo (Marc Porel) was giving her a penetrating look and a barely perceptible nod. Her husband fails to recognize the significance of Giuliana – so timid and submissive otherwise – singing this particular aria. As she asks her husband to help her fasten her veil, she concocts the ruse that she is going to an auction. Her singing, a revelatory action, is paired with another new sensory experience: she has generously sprayed herself with a new perfume, crabapple, which intrigues him even more. To the combination of sound, smell, and touch, Visconti adds yet another, visual, indicator of Giuliana's inner transformation. Undoubtedly ladies of her class wore veils to protect against the dust of the street and other discomforts, but here the veil endows this scene with an added narrative dimension. Pulling the veil tightly around her face, Giuliana escapes Tullio, turns into a stranger, a phantom, to him, which serves to reignite his interest in her after having previously favoured his mistress. When Visconti prepared this scene, he told his crew to have Laura Antonelli wrap the veil tightly around her face, just as in the sculptures of Medardo Rosso. As mentioned in Chapter 5, Visconti often expressed how he had imagined a costume, a set or a filmic image in reference to other artists. Here he referred to one of the most important late nineteenth- and early twentieth- century Italian sculptors. Medardo Rosso (1858-1928) worked mainly with wax because of its colourful effects and because it enabled him to render very subtle transitions. In the scene with Giuliana, Visconti was most likely referring to his *Donna velata – impressione di sera sul boulevard* (1893), where a veil is so tightly fastened around the face of a woman, only its contours are visible. Several versions of Rosso's sculpture exist, including one in the Galleria d'Arte Moderna in Rome, which would have been easily accessible to Visconti. The work dates from almost the same time as Gabriele D'Annunzio's novel *L'innocente* (*The Intruder*, 1892), the basis for the film.³²⁴

324 Many versions exist of which many unautographed and several made post-mortem. Autographed versions can be found also at e.g. Openluchtmuseum Middelheim, Antwerp (1895); Pinacoteca di Brera, Milano (1895); Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon (1907); and Ca' Pesaro, Venice (1912-1914). The version at the GNAM in Rome dates of 1905. For all of these versions, see the catalogue raisonnée of Rosso's work: Paolo Mola, Fabio Vitucci, *Medardo Rosso. Catalogo ragionato della scultura* (Milano: Skira, 2009). In 2007-8 the Peggy Guggenheim Museum in Venice hosted an exhibition on Rosso:



Fig. 50-51. L'innocente (Luchino Visconti 1976).



*Fig. 52. Medardo Rosso,
Donna velata – impressione
di sera sul boulevard
(1893). Galleria Nazionale
d'Arte Moderna e
Contemporanea, Rome.*

Once Tullio abandons his mistress, he visits Giuliana at his mother's countryside villa, La Badiola, in Tuscany. He takes her to the nearby villa, named Villalilla, where they spent their honeymoon. Again, her face is concealed by a veil though now out of shame due to her becoming pregnant by her lover and her fear that Tullio will repudiate her. As he has fallen back in love with her and wants to sleep with her again, however, he lifts her veil to kiss her – the first of a series of garments that he intends to take off (see Chapter 9 for mobile framing along the garments in *L'innocente*). Giuliana resists at first but finally gives in. Tullio's taking off her veil and revealing her face serves as a fitting counterpoint to the earlier veiling scene. It is one of the typical examples of veiling and unveiling in Visconti's films.³²⁵

Literary roots of a visual motif. The veil with D'Annunzio

Visconti's veiling and unveiling is a form of *ekphrasis* – the rendering and re-elaboration of visual images (paintings, filmic images) in texts. Indeed, references to art in this case might only exist because of a covert intermediary – literature.³²⁶ Visconti certainly was not the first who played with veils and unveiling in *L'innocente*; it also occurs in the D'Annunzio novel. The veiling scene is a key moment in the novel because Tullio thinks back to 'Juliana in front of the mirror, on that November day',³²⁷ where the eye (her beauty, the colour of her dress) and touch (securing the veil) are linked to smell (her perfume and the chrysanthemums in her room) and hearing (Glück's aria). While he is charmed by her grace, he also suspects her of adultery. After she asks him to fasten the veil, D'Annunzio describes the effect of her actions on Tullio, 'She raised her arms and held them over her head to fasten the veil, and her white fingers tried in vain to fasten it. Her pose was full of grace. The white fingers made me think: "How long since we clasped hands. [...] But now that hand is perhaps defiled". And while I fastened the veil, I felt a sudden revulsion in thinking of the possible pollution'.³²⁸ D'Annunzio foregrounds Tullio's double standard since he is very open about his own affair with his mistress. Visconti's Tullio seems totally unaware of his wife's secret adventure and believes that she is going to an auction. When he goes there himself, he realizes his wife's potential infidelity through insinuations made by his mistress, Teresa.

The novel, *L'innocente*, was not adapted to the letter. What is especially striking is that D'Annunzio's Tullio states at the beginning that he has slain a child and that no court in the world would convict him; yet, he wants to confess. The novel then flashes back to the story. Visconti worked mostly with linear

...*Rosso – the Transient Form* (2007-8). See also Harry Cooper, Sharon Hecker, *Medardo Rosso. Second Impressions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003) and Christoph Brockhaus, Dieter Schwarz eds., *Medardo Rosso* (Dusseldorf: Richter Verlag 2004). Fall 2014 Museum Boijmans in Rotterdam acquired another version, after its exhibition *Brancusi, Rosso, Man Ray – Framing Sculpture* (Spring 2014).

325 This scene does not occur in the novel.

326 Cf. Werner Wolf's treatment of covert and overt intermediality in his book, *The Musicalisation of Fiction: A Study in the Theory and History of Intermediality* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999). For Wolf, see also the introduction of this book.

327 Gabriele D'Annunzio, *The Intruder* (Kansas City: Valancourt Books, 2009) trans. Arthur Hornblow, p. 54. This edition reissues the Hornblow translation, edited by The Page Company & The Colonial Press (1919).

328 *Ibid.*, p. 34.



Fig. 53. *L'innocente* (Luchino Visconti 1976).

narratives without flashbacks, and thus begins the film with a scene, not in the book, set in a fencing school that introduces Tullio.³²⁹ Immediately afterwards, we see a confrontation set during a concert, also invented for the movie, between Giuliana and Tullio's mistress, the countess Teresa Raffo (Jennifer O'Neill). Both in this and the subsequent scene, Teresa plays an important role, and she reappears periodically throughout the film. She is mentioned only indirectly in D'Annunzio's novel – she hardly matters. Giuliana's lover, Filippo d'Arborio, is also mentioned but has no dialogue, unlike in the Visconti film, as well as Teresa's other lover and Tullio's rival, Count Stefano Egano (Massimo Girotti). The novel focuses almost exclusively on Tullio's relationship with Giuliana and the jealousy that he transfers from her to her illegitimate child. In the novel, D'Annunzio establishes Tullio as a nuanced character. Originally riddled with doubts and overly solicitous of his ailing wife, he only becomes jealous much later, as he acknowledges. D'Annunzio's Tullio, then, seems more aware of his own, sometimes contradictory, feelings. He is also much more emotional than Visconti's cool, stern protagonist. Tullio's brother, Federico, is a gentleman farmer in the novel while Visconti portrays him as a rather carefree army officer. His mother hardly matters in the novel but has an important role in the second part of the film. Instead D'Annunzio gives an important role to the old servant, Giovanni di Scòrdio, the prospective godfather of Tullio and Giuliana's child, who recognizes that all is not bliss in the Hermil family. Finally, D'Annunzio's Tullio and Giuliana already have two daughters, who are absent in the film. In short, Visconti purged some characters while others, such as Teresa, were fleshed out to give weight to the Tullio-Teresa-Giuliana love triangle. In order to understand Giuliana's infatuation with D'Arborio, he is given a physical presence and dialogue. Tullio's suicide at the end was also added by Visconti and

329 Only later on, when Tullio recalls how he met D'Arborio in the fencing school, does the location become part of the narrative. In contrast, Visconti sticks to linear narrative and avoids flashback. *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

his screenwriters. Suso Cecchi d'Amico considered it less a moral judgement than the need to give narrative closure.³³⁰

Veils also appear frequently in *Il piacere* (*The Child of Pleasure*, 1889), D'Annunzio's debut novel. Visconti had initially wanted to adapt it and not *L'innocente*, but the actor-director Marco Vicario, who owned the rights, refused to give them up.³³¹ Suso Cecchi d'Amico recalls, 'We had already a script ready. Visconti was already too old and ill by then to undertake such a huge operation. Not that he would have been afraid to organize the reconstruction of late nineteenth-century Rome, as he had already undertaken such an operation in Palermo for *The Leopard*. The whole context and culture of *Il piacere* he knew very well: the restaurants and cafés of those years, the mundane salons, and the carriages on the Pincio and in the park of Villa Borghese. He considered the story also much better, more apt, than *L'innocente*'.³³² Still, the fact that *L'innocente* was shot largely in interiors, with just a handful of exteriors on the private grounds of villas in Rome and near Lucca, must have been a deciding factor.³³³

The atmosphere of *Il piacere* remained an important guide for Visconti's *L'innocente*, especially its set decoration. Set designer Mario Garbuglia remarked about Teresa Raffo's red salon at the beginning of the film and the blue conservatory where Tullio commits suicide, 'Those were literary inspirations. When Tullio is in the salon, that is all literally described in *Il piacere* by D'Annunzio. Our passion for red, for the velvet, for that ottoman next to the chimney where they have sex, or at least where they undress, that's all been described in *Il piacere*'.³³⁴ The film's two concerts also seem to originate from the dinner/musical soirée in *Il piacere* in which Andrea Sperelli and Elena Muti, the protagonists, meet for the first time. Thus Visconti's *L'innocente* draws scenes, settings, as well as costumes such as veils, from D'Annunzio's other works. In *Il piacere*, D'Annunzio writes on the final meeting of Elena and Andrea before she leaves him, 'Wrapped in her ample furs, her veil drawn down, her hands encased in thick chamois leather gloves, Elena sat and mutely watched the passing landscape. Andrea breathed with delight the subtle perfume of heliotrope exhaled by the costly fur, while he felt Elena's arm warm against his own'.³³⁵

330 Interview with Suso Cecchi D'Amico, 26 October 1984. Production designer Mario Garbuglia thought the suicide to be rather irrational, emotional. He also considered the film rather more Proust-like than D'Annunzio-like, echoing Visconti's never realized adaptation of Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, for which Visconti and Garbuglia did visit locations in France in 1971. The concert at the start of the film, shot at Palazzo Colonna in Rome, was inspired by the concert of the Marquise de Saint-Euverte in Proust's *Recherche*, according to Garbuglia. Interview with Mario Garbuglia, 16 October 1984. For more on Proust and *L'innocente*, see below in this chapter.

331 Idem. Interview with Mario Garbuglia, 3 May 2004. Vicario ultimately never filmed the novel. One of his last films, *Mogliamante* (1977), made immediately after *L'innocente*, starred Laura Antonelli, the female lead of Visconti's film.

332 Interview with Suso Cecchi D'Amico, 26 October 1984.

333 On the locations of *L'innocente*, see my article 'Le illusioni de L'Innocente. Rinventare l'Ottocento', <http://www.luchinovisconti.net>, Italian translation by Ciro Schettino of my Dutch written text 'De illusies van L'Innocente. De negentiende eeuw opnieuw uitgevonden', *Skrien* 37, 5 (June-July 2005), pp. 36-7.

334 Ibid.

335 Gabriele D'Annunzio, *The Child of Pleasure* (The Echo Library 2007; English edition of *Il piacere*), p. 42. The recent 2013 edition, *Pleasure*, by Penguin oddly enough lacks the whole section with this farewell scene.

When Andrea meets his new love, Maria Ferrès, along with her husband and daughter, for the first time, she has a thick veil over her face as she arrives by carriage: ‘Her head was enveloped in a large grey gauze which half covered her large black hat [...] Donna Maria left the carriage with a rapid and light step, and with a pretty grace lifted her veil above her mouth to kiss her friend. Andrea was suddenly struck by the profound charm of this slender, graceful, veiled woman, of whose face he saw only the mouth and the chin. “Maria, let me present to you my cousin, Count Andrea Sperelli Fieschi d’Ugenta”. Andrea bowed. The lady’s lips parted in a smile that was rendered mysterious from the rest of the face by being concealed by the veil’.³³⁶ Andrea and his cousin ride with the Ferrès family in their carriage. When the daughter threatens to jump out, her mother takes off her veil. This is the first time that Andrea sees her face and he becomes ecstatic because she has the oval face of a fifteenth-century Florentine *tondo*. She wears her enormous hair in a knot on her neck and the hair on her forehead is reminiscent of the famous sculpture called the *Antinous Farnese*.³³⁷ When Andrea declares his love for Maria, he compares her with a veil, ‘a fluttering veil, now impenetrable, now transparent, and yielding intermittent glimpses of a splendid but attainable treasure’.³³⁸ Maria also thinks in terms of veils, as she writes in her diary, ‘Why tear away the veil of uncertainty and put me face to face with his unveiled love?’³³⁹ When, at the novel’s end, Andrea sees Elena again, he immediately thinks back how she always lifts her veil.³⁴⁰ When she arrives, she is out of breath, ‘Under her black veil a faint flush diffused itself over her whole face’.³⁴¹

While *L’innocente* was suffused with the world described by D’Annunzio, it partly made up for Visconti’s lost project of adapting Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu*. While some of the research in settings and costumes turned up in *Death in Venice*, costume designer Tosi and set designer Garbuglia confirmed *L’innocente* combined its Rome setting with the style and look of Proust’s Paris. The inspiration for the costumes clearly came from the photography and painting of Proust’s world, such as the portraits by John Singer Sargent. Indeed, the ladies at the two concerts at the princess’s home (filmed at Palazzo Colonna in Rome) seem directly taken from Sargent.³⁴² They also come close to painted and photographed portraits of Élisabeth,

336 Ibid, p.76.

337 Ibid, p. 77. As mentioned, D’Annunzio loved to compare real living beauty with classical and antique precursors.

338 Ibid, p. 91.

339 Ibid, p. 101.

340 Ibid, p. 124.

341 Ibid, p. 127.

342 The princess herself at the first concert is dressed in a tight red dress which reminds of Sargent’s portraits of *Jeanne Kergolay, vicomtesse de Poillogne de Saint-Périer* (1883, Château de Blérincourt) and of *Mrs. Hugh Hammersley* (1892, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York). Especially the latter with its pinkish red dress comes to mind. Piero Tosi remarked he had looked at Boldini, Sargent and Paul Helleu, looking closely at the Louvre at Sargent’s portrait of woman in black, heavily made up, with the look of an aged prostitute. Today neither the Louvre nor Musée d’Orsay, which overtook the Louvre’s collection of nineteenth century art, possess such a Sargent, but possibly Tosi confused this with Sargent’s famous *Portrait of Madame X* (1883-4), which shows such a lady in tight black dress, lots of décolleté and indeed a heavily made up face. The painting is in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York since 1918. Piero Tosi, as cited in Campari (1994), p. 67. ...

Countess Greffulhe, whom Proust took as a model for his Duchess of Guermantes.³⁴³ In addition to Visconti's memory of his mother being always swathed in tulle (see ch. 4), Robert de Montesquiou, cousin of the countess praised her magnetic, black eyes: '*La Comtesse Henri Greffulhe / Deux regards noirs dans du tulle* (Two black looks in tulle)'.³⁴⁴ Proust explicitly writes in *Recherche* about Albertine's veil and toque that Marcel provides her for their drive in their car. He likes to see the veil floating behind her.³⁴⁵ Later on he remembers how, when in Venice, his mother would silently mourn the death of her mother, 'while sitting reading while she waited for me to return, her face shrouded in a tulle as agonising in its whiteness as her hair to myself [...]'.³⁴⁶ This description closely fits that of Tadzio's mother in *Death in Venice*, reading on the beach, but anxious about her son.

Other examples of veiling and unveiling with Visconti

Veiling and unveiling often recur in Visconti, particularly in his historical films. Livia constantly wears veils in *Senso*. When she comes back from the opera, she wears a tulle veil over her head that she had over her arms during the performance. After Livia says farewell to her cousin, Roberto, who is banished due to his participation in a riot, she veils her face in order not to be recognized as a member of the resistance. But her veiling comes too late: Mahler has recognized her and, a persistent womanizer, starts to court her. She gives in to him little by little, lifting her veil both metaphorically and literally. When Livia goes to visit Franz in his apartment, she wears a large gauze veil over her head, like a romantic cloud that flows along, but that also keeps her identity a secret (for the comparison with Manet, see Chapter 5). After her arrival, she waits until he lifts her veil – it is apparently customary for the man to take the initiative – after which they kiss. On her second visit – where she notices that he has hawked her locket – she has only

...Other portraits and paintings that fit the evening dresses of *L'innocente* are those by Sargent himself (*Mme Paul Poirson*, 1885; *Catherine Vlasto*, 1897), Giovanni Boldini (*Emiliana Concha de Ossal Pastello bianco*, 1888; and in particular *Comtesse de Leusse*, 1889), Thomas Eakins (*The concert singer Weda Cook*, 1892), James Tissot (*Vicomtesse de Montmorand*, 1889), Alfred Stevens (*La Baronne du Mesnil de Saint-Front*, 1887), Henri Gervex (*Young Woman with a Fan*, 1888), Émile Lévy (*Mme José-Maria de Hérédia*, 1885), Raimundo de Madrazo y Garreta (*La marquise d'Hervey Saint-Denys*, 1885), and Auguste Toulmouche (*Le billet*, 1883). While Giuliana with her parasol recalls the different variations of Claude Monet of a woman with a parasol (c. 1875) even if painted more than a decade before D'Annunzio's story, the outdoor clothes of Giuliana, Teresa and the woman in the company of Tullio's brother Raimondo remind of Sargent's portrait of *Mme Allouard-Jouan* (c.1884), Boldini's *Woman in black* (1888) and *Woman with a Black Hat* (1890), Philip Burne-Jones' *The Visitor* (1893) and Louis Anquetin' *Woman at the Champs-Élysées by night* (1889-93).

343 Anne de Cossé-Brissac, *La Comtesse Greffulhe*, (Paris: Perrin, 1991). Paul Helleu, who would be promoted by Greffulhe and Montesquiou and who would be remembered in Proust's *Recherche*, painted a typical pastel portrait of the Countess Greffulhe around 1886-90. Nadar took various pictures from Greffulhe around 1883-5. Both seem to have been important models for the dresses, accessories and hairdo of the ladies at the concerts in *L'innocente*.

344 Patrick Chaleyssin, *Robert de Montesquiou, mécène et dandy* (Paris: Somogy, 1992), p. 22. Another cousin, Boni de Castellane, wrote about her in his memories: 'She wore, pinned to her hair a long veil of tulle that was graciously enrolled around her and ended in a long, light trail'. Cited in Didier Masseur, *Une histoire du bon gout* (Paris: Perrin, 2014).

345 Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, II (London: Wordsworth Editions, 2006), pp. 336, 341, 351-2, 494. This is mostly in the volume *Cities of the Plain* (*Sodome et Gomorrhe*).

346 Ibid, p. 960. This is in the volume *La Fugitive/ Albertine Disparue*.



Fig. 54-55 (above). *Senso* (Luchino Visconti 1954).



Fig. 56 (left, middle). *The Damned* (Luchino Visconti 1969).



Fig. 57-58.
Conversation Piece (Luchino Visconti 1974).

half a veil over her eyes. Apparently she is less apprehensive about being recognized on the street. When she goes to the Arsenal to inquire about Franz, she is ashamed to ask his whereabouts and does not want to be recognized, and thus she wears a semi-transparent black veil with decorations that cover her whole face. Towards the end, when Livia travels to Verona to join Franz, she wears a heavy cloak (for the Castiglione cloak, see Chapter 5) despite the heat, and a black veil, which is attached with a pin to a black hat with trimmings. Though thick, you can still see her face through it. When Franz brutally jerks the hat from her head, causing her veil to fly off, he dishevels the hair of the beautifully dressed and coiffed woman, and reveals who she is: an older woman who betrayed her family and homeland for an unreliable, cowardly, and drunken younger lover. The unveiling thus symbolizes the unmasking of Livia's true situation. She is deeply hurt, goes mad, and takes her revenge. In short, veiling and unveiling has important consequences in many Visconti films.

This is apparent in the later films. In *The Leopard* the aristocratic Salina family travels from Palermo to their summer residence in the mountains, near the village of Donnafugata. Along the trip the ladies wear thick, though ineffectual, veils against dust and dirt; when they arrive, their faces are as white as sand. When they attend a customary Mass immediately after their arrival, they sit with their dusty faces in the pews, making it look like they still have on their veils or that they have turned into statues, similar to those above the church's altar.³⁴⁷

Sandra's (Claudia Cardinale) headscarf at the end of *Vaghe stelle dell'Orsa* may not be a real, face-covering veil but it can be seen as a sort of mourning veil, though in white, and it makes the same fluttering motion as those in other Visconti films. Sandra binds the shawl tightly before the mirror, representing her desire to control her emotions, but once outside, the strong wind persistently lifts the veil up and down as though other forces were contending against her resolve. Earlier in the film, Sandra's brother, Gianni (Jean Sorel), plays with her thick white woollen shawl – a clear surrogate for her – as he wants an incestuous relationship with her. The gesture is similar to the scene in *Senso* when Franz plays with Livia's bright green shawl, just as he plays with her feelings.

We see veiled and unveiled women also in *The Damned*, *Death in Venice*, and *Ludwig*. Sometimes veils are deliberately in the way, as in the final scene of *The Damned*. Sophie is dressed in bridal finery but cannot drink champagne due to the veil that her son, Martin, has lowered on purpose. Nobody offers help and so she stands helplessly with a full glass in her hand. When the glass is taken from her, she happily smiles the smile of a senile old woman. The heavy makeup designed to make her look younger does just the opposite. The action and the costumes signify this once proud and strong woman's mental and physical collapse. In *Death in Venice* Tadzio's mother's huge veil is draped loosely around her face and waves up and down because of the sea breeze on the beach, making her character even more ethereal (Visconti

347 Visconti shot in the Sicilian village Ciminna which substituted for the Donnafugata of Lampedusa's novel. While the façade of Don Fabrizio's palace was built entirely *ex novo*, original buildings were used as well, such as the local Chiesa Madre with its abundant seventeenth-century sculptures by Scipione Li Volsi da Tusa (1622) in the apse, visible in certain shots. Francesco Petruzzini ed., *Visconti e il Gattopardo, la scena del Principe* (Milano: De Agostini Rizzoli, 2001), p. 44.

clearly loves fluttering textiles, therefore his predilection for waving curtains as well). As already mentioned (see Chapter 5), her long veils were inspired by those that Visconti's own mother wore. In *Ludwig*, by contrast, the black *voile* is spun tightly around the face of Elisabeth while she is riding in a circus, wearing a black amazon outfit and a black top hat. The tight veil makes her face somewhat stringent, which fits well with her firm and rather diffident character.

Conversation Piece makes striking use of veils for an uncharacteristic flashback in Visconti, when the professor's mother enters and lifts the veil of her felt hat (the fashion in the 1910s),³⁴⁸ and when his wife (Claudia Cardinale) throws up her bridal veil and takes it off in slow motion. At first this gives Cardinale a divine aspect, though soon afterwards her appearance grows increasingly negative as we realize that their marriage was a failure. Dominique Sanda's hairstyle and pearl necklace was modelled after the aforementioned portrait of Donna Carla Erba by Argnani (see Chapter 3 and 5).

Iconographic tradition

The representation of veiled women has a long iconographic tradition going back to antiquity. Artists found a solution to the challenge of correctly expressing motion in hard materials like bronze and marble by covering the faces and bodies of women with translucent fabric. Ancient Roman artists knew the device of *velificatio*, a billowing veil that forms a kind of frame around the figure, either to stress their divinity or to turn mortals, such as members of the imperial family, into a *diva* or *divo*. We could compare this to the billowing bridal veil around Cardinale in *Conversation Piece*. As classical busts show, veils were worn by Vestal priestesses, crowned by a wreath; these were the forerunners to contemporary bridal veils and they suggested virginity. This was later picked up by religious women who no longer wanted to show their faces to the world and thus appeared sculptures of nuns and female saints with face-covering but semi-transparent veils.³⁴⁹ The veil is a recurring phenomenon particularly in nineteenth-century sculpture where it framed the ethereal appearance of the ideal woman such as in Raffaele Monti's *The Sleep of Sorrow and the Dream of Joy* (1861, London, Victoria & Albert Museum) or his *Veiled Lady* (1860) in Chatsworth House, Devonshire.

The veiled woman as a priestess, as a symbolic appearance, also appeared in the Italian silent film *Rapsodia satanica* (Nino Oxilia, 1917).³⁵⁰ Here Alba d'Oltrevita (Lyda Borelli) wraps herself in yards of tulle while admiring herself in a triple mirror. She turns into a ghost the moment she opens the doors and her huge veils, like a *velificatio*, flutter around her. She uses her veils to beckon a distant cavalier who she thinks is her lover. He turns out to be the Devil, however, who turns her back to the old woman she was at the beginning of this Faustian story. The film is about a woman who ecstatically surrenders to Love and encounters Death instead.

348 The shape is reminiscent of the self-portrait by Romaine Brooks (1923), Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington DC.

349 Federico Fellini created a parody of this in his clerical fashion show in *Roma* (1972).

350 For the use of the shawl in the diva film, see Dirk Lauwaert, 'Divismo', *De Witte Raaf*, 1-10-1999.



Fig. 59. *Rapsodia satanica* (Nino Oxilia 1917).

Within the Decadent philosophy of the nineteenth century, Love and Death were closely linked.³⁵¹

The imagery of the dead woman as veiled repeatedly recurs in funerary art. Already in the Greco-Roman mysteries, initiates wore veils that were lifted by a priestess. Veils were death symbols and lifting them was interpreted as rebirth or resurrection. Think of the *Pudicizia velata* (The Veiled Truth, 1750) by Antonio Corradini at the Cappella Sansevero in Naples, which crowns the tomb of the mother of the chapel's founder Prince Raimondo di Sangro. A large sculpture of a *Cristo Velato* (Veiled Christ, 1753) by Giuseppe Sammartino, with the naked Christ covered with an almost tactile veil of marble, stands in the middle of the chapel. Corradini also made a standing *Donna velata* (Veiled Woman, early eighteenth-century), now at the Louvre.

In nineteenth-century funerary art, sculptures of veiled women are abundant as in such cemeteries as the Campo Verano in Rome, the Zentralfriedhof in Vienna and the Cimetière de Montmartre in Paris. Jean Epstein deployed the same connotations in his film adaptation of Edgar Allen Poe's *La chute de la maison Usher* (*The Fall of the House of Usher*, 1928), when Marguerite is presented as shrouded in veils and rising from the grave. Related to this is the mourning veil that is worn during funerals and in periods of so-called 'high mourning'. It has its painterly representations in, for example, William Bouguereau's *Le jour des morts* (1859, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Bordeaux), in which a mother and daughter are sitting at a tomb, the former wearing a transparent veil that prevents her from using her nose and mouth. In Visconti's films these mourning veils return in *The Damned*, where the women wear black veils covering their full faces at Essenbeck's funeral.

In addition to its associations with religion and death, a particular kind of semi-transparent veil also possessed a coquettish aspect in the later nineteenth century as it did not completely conceal the face but suggested its features behind a lattice-like screen, as in Auguste Renoir's *Jeune femme à la voilette* (1876, Musée d'Orsay, Paris). In *L'innocente* we see such a veil over Teresa Raffo's face when she discovers Tullio at the auction and happily turns to face him while the camera

351 See Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970, orig. 1933).



Fig. 60 (left). Auguste Renoir, *Jeune femme à la voilette* (1876). Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Fig. 61 (right). *L'innocente* (Luchino Visconti 1976).

zooms in to a close-up.³⁵² Proust also refers to such a veil in his *Recherche*, which the narrator's grandmother wears when they travel by train to the sea: 'But when my grandmother thought that my eyes were shut I could see her, now and again, between the large black spots on her veil, steal a glance at me, then withdraw it, and steal back again [...]'³⁵³

The next stage was the half veil that covered the eyes and nose but showed the mouth (as opposed to Islamic veils that show only the eyes and cover the mouth). Whereas full face-covering veils protected against dust, wind and sunlight, and also kept men at some distance – as seen in *Che freddo!* (Giuseppe De Nittis, 1874, private collection) – yet hampered eating and drinking, the half-veil made the mouth accessible for food, drink, and kisses. They were apparently popular in the 1880s. This is clearly visible in the otherwise mundane paintings by Giuseppe De Nittis, *Donna con la veletta* (c. 1880, Museo Civico, Barletta), *Ora triste* (c.1882-1883, Museo Civico, Barletta), and *Signora con il cane/Ritorno dalle corse* (1878, Museo Revoltella, Trieste).³⁵⁴ Half-veils covering the eyes and nose can also be seen in Ilya Repin's *Baroness Varvara Ivanovna Iskul* (1889, Tretyakov Museum, Moscow), the chic lady in James Tissot's *Embarkation at Calais* (1884, Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp), the lady on Gustave Caillebotte's *Paris, a rainy day/Jour de pluie à Paris* (1877, Art Institute of Chicago) and on the café visitor in Federico Zandomenighi's *Al caffè* (1884, Museo Civico di Palazzo Te, Mantova). The two posthumous paintings of the Countess de Castiglione by Jacques-Émile Blanche (1914) represent her with a black transparent half-veil that, together with her black clothes, give the impression of mourning. They were both based on photos by Pierson dating from 1893 (see Chapter 5).³⁵⁵

While late nineteenth-century hairstyles and hats emphasized constriction, the early twentieth century witnessed lush, larger and looser hair and hats. Hats grew huge and were called Gainsborough or picture hats. By 1910 skirts were quite narrow and evoked the era of the French Directory (1795-1799), Paul Poiret was a

352 The auction scene is absent in the novel *L'innocente*, but an important auction scene occurs in *Il piacere*.

353 Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, Vol. I (London: Wordsworth Editions, 2006), p. 596.

354 For the two first mentioned works, see the catalogue *Giuseppe De Nittis. I dipinti del Museo Civico di Barletta alla Fondazione Magnani Rocca* (Venetië: Marsilio, 1998), cat.nr. 83, p. 116, and cat.nr. 90, p. 123.

355 Apraxine/Demange 2000, cat. nr. 90-93, pp. 154-7.



Fig. 62 (left). Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida, *Under the Awning/Zarauz* (1910). Saint Louis Art Museum. Fig. 63 (right). *Death in Venice* (Luchino Visconti 1971).

leader in this fashion trend alongside Jacques Doucet, Jeanne Paquin and Mariano Fortuny. For eveningwear, Poiret provided alternatives to giant hats by introducing turbans or ordinary felt hats crowned with aigrettes. On the beach or on the road in newfangled automobiles, large veils protected against sand and dust.³⁵⁶ This is a notable feature in contemporary paintings as can be seen in Edmund Charles Tarbell's *The Blue Veil* (1899, San Francisco, Fine Arts Museum), where the hat remains small but the veil is quite large. The fluttering veil combined with the big hat can be seen in Joaquín Sorolla's *Under the Awning / Zarauz* (1910, Saint Louis Art Museum). In *Death in Venice*, Visconti offers us a variety of headgear in the foyer of the Hotel Des Bains from Gainsborough hats to turbans à la Poiret, though the Lido beach is dominated by the white summer dress combined with large summer hats and veils as in Sorolla and Tarbell.

In the twentieth century both the large face-covering veil and the small half-veil remained popular in fashionable circles. A special case can be made for Edward Steichen's photo (1924) of Gloria Swanson for *Vogue* magazine. He photographed her *en face* through a black lace veil that is attached to the camera lens and not worn directly on her face. This gives the picture a mysterious atmosphere as if her head is floating.³⁵⁷ On the other hand, the lace is rendered so sharply that it departs from early twentieth century photographic pictorialism. Traces of pictorialism are more evident in the work of studio photographer Emilio Sommariva, who started out in the pictorialist tradition before gradually moving into glamour photography. His 1927 portrait of the Italian theatre and film actress, Vera Vergani, shows her wearing a barely visible veil over her eyes and hair. The covering of the light on the eyes increases the photo's glamorous atmosphere.³⁵⁸

356 Isadora Duncan, the famous dancer, who liberated the twentieth-century body of its stiffness by corsets and thick layers of clothes like no other, wore very long shawls and veils. In 1927, however, she was killed when her shawl ended up tangled in the wheels of her moving car. One of the very many biographies about Duncan is Ean Wood, *Headlong Through Life: The Story of Isadora Duncan* (Brighton: Book Guild, 2006). For Proust's description of Albertine's fluttering veil while driving a car, see n. 343.

357 From the 1920s, layers of gauze were often used in films to make a close up more *fleu* and glamorous. The veil between the camera and the person was shot out of focus, while the camera centered on the face. Sometimes gauze was placed between the actor and the background setting, in order to emphasize the character. Salt 1992, pp. 161-3.

358 Ginex 2004, pp. 183-7. One of the pictures is also the book's cover photo.



Fig. 64 (left). *Shanghai Express* (Josef von Sternberg, 1932). Fig. 65 (right). *The Damned* (Luchino Visconti 1969).

In the 1930s the translucent, coquettish veils combined with the ladies hat experienced a revival, partly because Marlene Dietrich wore them in Josef von Sternberg's *Dishonored* (1931), *Shanghai Express* (1932), and *The Devil is a Woman* (1935). Travis Banton was responsible for Dietrich's costumes in all three films.³⁵⁹ At the end of *Dishonored*, the Mata Hari-like spy is killed by a firing squad but defies the soldiers by dying in style. She puts on her coat with its large upright collar and lowers her veil over her face. And when a young lieutenant refuses to execute her, she quickly puts on lip gloss. In *Shanghai Express* Dietrich wears a flat little hat with feathers, placed diagonally on her head. The veil attached to it also runs diagonally across her face, covering only her left cheek (diagonals were very popular in 1930s design). The whole suggests a diagonal from top right to bottom left. Dietrich wears a dress whose shoulders and sleeves are filled with large upright feathers, suggesting a special, elegant breed of black crow. She is the *demi-mondaine* Shanghai Lily, involved with many men though always in love with her ex, the stern Captain Harvey (Clive Brook).

In *The Devil is a Woman* where Dietrich wears various extreme styles, Travis Banton outdid himself. During a carnival she wears a mask and a lattice-like veil with miniature puffballs under which her painted lips and big smile clearly emerge. The veil is slightly reminiscent of Ingrid Thulin's in *The Damned*, in which Sophie finally marries her beloved but is immediately given poison as a wedding gift from her son. When Thulin smiles at the so-called wedding guests, who are in fact Martin's friends and whores, she is a wry, clownish version of Dietrich's characters. Earlier in the film, Charlotte Rampling wears a typical half *voile à la Dishonored* and *Shanghai Express* over her eyes and nose as she seeks out an official to grant her permission to emigrate. It was apparently not only *Der blaue Engel* that played a role in *The Damned* (see Chapter 4 for the use of photo portraits in *The Damned*; Chapters 7-10 for deep staging and blocking of the character, and for framing,

359 Visconti was always deeply impressed by Marlene Dietrich's films, in particular *Der blaue Engel* (*The Blue Angel*, Josef von Sternberg, 1930). The two also knew and respected each other, according to the biographers and according to former collaborators I interviewed, such as Piero Tosi.

mobile framing, and use of mirrors in the Sternberg-Dietrich films, including a comparison of *Der blaue Engel* with *Death in Venice*.³⁶⁰

While the previous chapter focused on Visconti's use of film costumes and the pictorial sources in one film, *Senso*, this chapter shows how costume informs his entire oeuvre. From such historical films such as *L'innocente*, *Senso*, and *Death in Venice* to those on contemporary subjects like *Vaghe stelle dell'Orsa*, we see how Visconti plays with veiling and unveiling in a figurative and a literal sense with different types of veils and veiling. These were also contextualized and historicized by comparing their representations in literature, painting, and sculpture. Returning to Church Gibson's classification of film costumes from the previous chapter, we can say that the motive of veils, veiling, and unveiling indicates how the costume contributes to the character and the plot. In that sense Visconti's film costumes fit seamlessly within the formalist and functionalist model defined in *Film Art* by David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson. However, Visconti also made choices based more on memories that were not necessarily intrinsic to the narrative. Finally, Visconti and his staff may have gone to great lengths to represent film costumes realistically by dusting, creasing, bleaching or reworking them. Still, many of his costumes rise above the narrative and, along with the decor and props, create an aesthetically pleasurable world, especially in his widescreen films. As mentioned in the previous chapters, Visconti sometimes creates distance between character and spectator, or between characters, by covering an actor's face – either with a hat, as he did in *Ossessione*'s opening scene, or with a veil, creating the same tension and curiosity as in *Il piacere*. Just like in a silent movie, the attaching or the removal of a veil – thus the covering or the showing of a face – needs no dialogue. The combination of clothing, gesture, and facial expression already reveals everything. In Werner Wolf's words: it sets the framing for us, steering the interpretation (see Introduction). At the same time, like the mesh-like veils, the image is only semi-transparent, leaving the spectator room to guess – the borders are permeable.

360 In the opening scene, Martin (Helmut Berger) goes on stage in drag, imitating Dietrich's Lola Lola in *Der blaue Engel*, singing 'Kinder, heut'abend such ich mir was aus, einen Mann, einen richtigen Mann'. The song clearly refers to the upcoming 'real man', which might be Friedrich, who kills his fiancée's father-in-law, but it could also refer to Joachim's son, Konstantin, taking over the factory, or to Martin himself, or to Hitler, or to the Nazis in general. It is clear that both the pre-First World War character, Joachim, and the Weimar representative Herbert are doomed.

Part Two

Staging, Framing, and Mirroring in Visconti's Films

Staging in Depth: Objects and People

From his first film, *Ossessione*, Visconti wielded all manner of ways to play with depth in the filmic image. We are often faced with an indirect view of the frame's middle ground and background through objects placed in the foreground. *Ossessione* opens with a POV shot through the windshield of a moving truck, over which roll the opening credits. The truck is moving fast on a dyke along a river. We look through the bars of the window, creating a *mise en abîme* (a frame within a frame). Shortly thereafter, the driver stands next to a fence and yells for help at the patrons of a trattoria. The fence in the foreground, of which we only see the top and right side, clearly creates depth in the image. Later in the film we see, after a neighbourhood party in the trattoria, a piece of cloth that functions like a curtain, through which we see Gino (Massimo Girotti) standing in the background on the dyke. Visconti also obscures our view by filming his characters through semi-transparent curtains, as when Gino lies on Anita's (Dhia Cristiani) bed, or by framing them between objects, such as the gas pumps at the beginning, or the huge pile of dirty dishes surrounding Giovanna (Clara Calamai) in the kitchen after the party. Finally Visconti also uses people to create depth as in the over-the-shoulder and tracking shots of Giovanna as she spots Gino with Anita while sitting in a café in Ferrara, or the shots of Gino and the Spaniard (Elio Marcuzzo) overlooking the sea at Ancona. This playing with depth is not exclusive to *Ossessione* but returns in all of Visconti's films and reveals his love of the indirect view on his characters, which creates a kind of commentary about them. Often, Visconti combines strategies of identification (subjectivity) and distance (objectivity). Consciously or not, his staff and he appropriated a legacy, as the aforementioned examples have their precedents in French and Italian sound cinema, silent cinema, nineteenth-century painting and early modern painting.

Victor Stoichita, staging & framing

In his intriguing study, *L'instauration du tableau* (1993), which appeared in English in 1997 as *The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Meta-Painting* and reappeared in a revised edition in 2015, the Romanian art historian Victor Stoichita researched the phenomenon of *framing*, in particular the frame within the frame, in paintings. By combining this with *staging in depth*, he focused on such phenomena as the representation of mirrors, paintings and maps, but also those of door and window openings in early modern painting. Stoichita's research focused on the period 1522-1675, starting with the iconoclastic revolution of Wittenberg and ending with Samuel Hoogstraten's metapictorial painting of the back of a painting. Stoichita is an extremely rewarding source for researching

staging of depth and framing in Visconti's films, not only in comparison with early modern painting, but also with nineteenth-century painting, silent film, and the sound cinema of the 1930s and 1940s.

Stoichita avers that the concept of *painting* is a relatively modern one. In contrast to the Medieval era, when images had a specific function within a culture dominated by religion, paintings had neither a fixed place nor a liturgical function by the end of the Renaissance. According to Stoichita, the birth of painting coincides with that of the early modern concept of the image, the rise of Protestantism and iconoclasm, with an emerging appreciation of painting as a medium not necessarily tied to a religious function and the creation of the iconography of the artist. Stoichita opens his study with a lexicographical explanation. The term, *tableau*, not only means painted representation but was increasingly specified as figurative representation, painted on canvas or on wood, beginning in the seventeenth century. At the same time, the term also means, in French, a hole in the wall and a door- or window frame.³⁶¹ While this might seem to make it an apt metaphor researching representations of frames and their doubles, *tableau* unfortunately lacks this second meaning in other languages. The English language only recognizes the first meaning, as Stoichita admits.³⁶²

Stoichita's thesis is that from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century early modern, especially Dutch, paintings were the first to be considered as collectible objects that could be aesthetically appreciated. This also revealed the growing self-awareness of the artist as the creator of a *painting*. This modernity is highly reflexive or, as Stoichita writes, *metapictorial*. He shows how this meta-painting structures the image – how painted images show both their artists' imaginative abilities and how artists are positioned relative to them (inside, outside or in front). Niches, windows, doors, frames, and curtains may refer to the painting as a framed object *in itself*. Surfaces like white walls, maps, mirrors, and paintings within the painted image engage in dialogue with one another and with the entire representation within its imagining surface. In 2003, Ian Verstegen stated in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*: 'For Stoichita, the painting slowly becomes aware of its purely representational functions through games, still-lives, and various playful margins – niches, windows, doors, and frames'.³⁶³ Protestantism contributed to the secularisation of the image, to its transformation from a sign of divine intervention to a mere sign, a metaphor. 'This spurred further meta-reflection in the sanctioned scientific ambience of Protestant Holland and other places where paintings, maps, and mirrors provide further intertextual questioning of the primary image'. Stoichita makes a distinction between the Inquiring Eye (*l'oeil curieux*) and the Methodological Eye (*l'oeil méthodologique*). The first is linked to rhetoric – the encyclopaedic theatre of memory – while the latter has to

361 Stoichita 2015, pp. 33-5.

362 Art critic Yael Even is therefore critical about Stoichita's book in her review. Yael Even, 'The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Meta-Painting', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 31, 1, Special Edition (Spring, 2000), pp. 180-1. *Quadro*, the Italian word for a painting, refers to size (square) but also means *take* or *shot* in film language. It implicitly refers to framing, even if the Italian word for a painting's frame is *cornice*.

363 Ian Verstegen, 'The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Meta-Painting', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 61, 2 (Spring 2003), pp. 203-4.

Fig. 66. Pieter Aertsen, *Vanitas Stilleben (Im Hintergrund Christus bei Maria und Martha)* (1552). Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.



Fig. 67. Diego Velázquez, *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary* (probably 1618). National Gallery, London.



do with the emergence of experimental science, ‘the dark chamber of Descartes’ as Versteegen writes. Versteegen finds this a more useful division than the old division of the Italian *historia* and the Northern *description* by Svetlana Alpers and others.³⁶⁴

In Pieter Aertsen’s *Vanitas Stilleben (Im Hintergrund Christus bei Maria und Martha)* (*Christ in the House of Martha and Mary*, 1552, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna), Stoichita argues that the didactic-religious representation has been moved to the background and embedded in a still life-like composition.³⁶⁵ It has become a representation within a representation. We look at a *tableau vivant* through the still life. People, normally the most prominent element in the composition, are now subordinated to objects. The *trompe-l’oeil* elements, such as the life-size table, the open moneybox and the purse hanging over the little door, are especially striking. These kinds of paintings were known to hang in kitchens. Thus, the painting also creates a relationship with its exhibition site: it is not only a mirror but an extension of the space as well. Incidentally, for a perfect *trompe-l’oeil* effect, objects need to be fully seen and that is *not* happening here: ‘By using the frame to prevent these objects from emerging completely, the artist hints that these accessories (*hors-d’oeuvre*) remain above all a figment within the painting’.³⁶⁶ By the illusion of what, in film, we call *off-screen space*, the painter suggests a metapictorial performance. It is as if the camera has tracked backwards from the

364 Ibid.

365 Stoichita 2015, pp. 39-45.

366 Ibid., p. 41.

Biblical presentation to reveal the off-screen space: offscreen, off-text, off-image. This is what makes Aertsen's work revolutionary, Stoichita claims.

In addition, Stoichita coins the term, *parergon*, for the representation of the foreground elements, i.e. the seemingly insignificant, ornamental, decorative, derivative, in short, that which seems to be *hors-texte*, beyond the *ergon*, the textual meaning of the painting (the Biblical quotation of Christ visiting Mary and Martha). But this *parergon* tells its own story: the profane as the antithesis of the sacred. It seems therefore to be a commentary on the representation in the background. The lamb and the ferment in the foreground, for example, symbolically refer back to Christ and cannot be interpreted as antitheses. Stoichita also speaks of an intertextual relationship in which spiritual and literal nourishment is combined. In Visconti's films too, we will observe that foregrounded objects work as *parergon*: seemingly insignificant or *hors-texte* at first sight but, upon closer inspection, functioning as antithesis or as a way of confirming and reinforcing the narrative or the characters that we see on the canvas.

In Stoichita's next example, Diego Velázquez's version of *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary* (probably 1618, National Gallery, London), we see, on the left side, an old woman pointing at young woman to her left, but we also take in the whole performance simultaneously. The old woman serves as an *exhortatio*: she introduces us to the image and encourages our gaze. The second, younger, woman looks straight outward, commencing a dialogue with us. Both are depicted as life-size half-figures, which strengthens the *slice of life* feeling. While this tradition of *mezzefigure* existed before, it became topical again around 1600 – indeed it was even programmatic for Caravaggio. In Velázquez's time it was considered vulgar and inferior. In Aertsen's painting we saw the transition between foreground and background. In Velázquez, however, the background space has been offset from the foreground and has become a painting within a painting. While Alberti had already discovered that painting could be like an open window and a metaphor for the perspective method, he still believed that, within the composition, a homogeneous, coherent three-dimensional space should be maintained. This homogeneity begins to disappear with Velázquez: the background space may be not only a window but also another painting. As the foregrounded characters do not create any relation with the background, it is up to the audience to explain this spatial relationship. The same applies to the foregrounded objects or details in Visconti's films: they work as *exhortatio* and are the threshold to the representation, to the narrative and to the main characters.

Flowers and plants as *repoussoirs* in Visconti's films

In painting, the term *repoussoir*³⁶⁷ is used to describe people or objects (such as trees) that are intentionally put in the foreground, against (or even cut off by) the margins to suggest greater depth and to draw the viewer into the composition. Hence the *repoussoir* is often represented as dark or even black, compared with the lighter background that seems to be reduced [hence the term, *repousser* = push

367 See P.T.A. Swillens, *Encyclopedie van de schilderkunst en aanverwante kunsten* (Utrecht/Het Antwerpen: het Spectrum, 1977), p. 137.

back]. Creating *repoussoirs* became popular from the era of Mannerism and the Baroque onwards, especially in Dutch seventeenth-century landscape and genre painting. Vermeer was a master of it in his interior scenes, while Ruysdael wielded it in his landscapes in his use of trees, a process still taught in introductory classes in figurative painting and photography. In cinema, a similar term exists, *depth cue*, though it has a broader meaning than *repoussoir*.³⁶⁸ *Depth cue* may refer to all the means within the film frame that help us to see depth in the image, thus not only *objects or people in the foreground*. *Repoussoirs* are often located on the left side, because we usually view images from left to right, just as we read in the same direction. Visconti often used objects as *repoussoirs* in his shots. Unlike painting, *repoussoirs* in his films may partially or completely obscure the characters temporarily. The moving image makes it possible to frame the actors' performances or camera movement (*mobile framing*) to filter or block our view by use of *repoussoirs*.

The play with depth in Visconti's films not only recalls that of early modern painting, but also of European silent cinema. Film historian Ben Brewster suggests that interest in *repoussoir* began as soon as characters were no longer filmed in full figure. In *Theatre to Cinema* (1997), Brewster and Lea Jacobs show that the introduction of the larger-than-life-sized image – where the feet of an actor were cut off – initially confused audiences. 'The cutting-off of the feet produces an ambiguity about how the image is to be interpreted. During the wave of 3-D films in the 1950s, it was normal to keep actors behind the front plane of the picture precisely to avoid this effect of figures lacking their lower limbs, yet floating in the air in front of the screen'.³⁶⁹ This also applies to early cinema, according to Brewster. *Repoussoirs* create a strong wall at the front of the frame, so that footless characters do not 'float' above the room even though their feet are cut off by the frame border, rather than by an internally diegetic element, say, the top of a piece of furniture. In films with considerable deep staging, in which the characters were shown full figure, such as in *L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise* (André Calmettes, Charles le Bargy, 1908), *repoussoirs* were less necessary because the foreground provided a kind of 'footlight'-limit for the actors. Once characters moved closer, however, the space in front, left and right caused problems. These were solved by separating the scene into several shots to show adjacent areas and filling the frame with *repoussoirs*.³⁷⁰

Visconti frequently films his protagonists through, behind or next to large bouquets of flowers. Is this only a formal technique, a way to emphasize the image's three-dimensionality, is it a simple matter of taste (Visconti loved flowers)

368 Bordwell/Thompson 2013, p. 146: 'In cinema, depth cues are provided by lighting, setting, costumes, and staging – that is, by all the aspects of mise-en-scene'.

369 Brewster/Jacobs 1997, pp. 167-8.

370 Ben Brewster to the author, 1 March 2008.



Fig. 68-69. *The Leopard* (Luchino Visconti 1963).

or is there a deeper meaning?³⁷¹ All three. Piero Tosi, Visconti's regular costume designer, explains that, 'The flowers in Visconti's films serve not only as decoration but also and above all as a means of expression for the filmmaker, of the characters, and their feelings'.³⁷² When in *The Leopard* Angelica meets the family of the prince, Don Fabrizio, for the first time, she hesitates at the threshold of the room. It is her baptism of fire. Pulling herself together, she raises her head, and enters with everyone looking at her. While ignoring the men she approaches the princess, the family matriarch, and bows, breaking the ice by upholding decorum. We see Cardinale in a medium long shot (*plan américain*) at the threshold, filmed behind a striking bouquet of yellow flowers. The actress walks to the left. In a reverse medium shot she is seen from behind while the bouquet remains in the left foreground. According to Tosi, the reason for the somewhat rustic character of the flowers was that it heralded Angelica as a figurative *flower* who, with her beauty, her pride and her flattering words, knows how to win over everyone. 'Angelica is the fresh, radiant flower, full shoulders, full breasts, full cheeks, glowing with health and vitality, the symbol of the new world, the emerging bourgeoisie, in contrast to the

371 Visconti did not hesitate to spend a lot on the flowers for his sets. At the budget review for *Ludwig*, a whopping 60,000 German Marks for plants and flowers was put on the bill. Fondo Visconti, Ludwig, C43-3, 012 911/12 'piano spese di lavorazione'. On the other hand, production designer, Mario Garbuglia, demurred that the famous anecdote from *The Leopard*, that Visconti had fresh flowers flown every day to the shoot in Sicily, was exaggerated, because in the opening scene, plastic flowers (barely visible) were used for the villa's garden. Interview with Garbuglia, 3 May 2004. Production leader of *The Leopard*, Pietro Notarianni, however, contradicted Garbuglia. He recalled having roses flown from San Remo to Palermo for the valedictorian scene of *Tancredi*, in which you hardly see the flowers. Interview with Pietro Notarianni, 18 May 2004.

372 Interview with Piero Tosi, 21 September 1984.

pale, somewhat meagre, Concetta [the daughter of Don Fabrizio]'.³⁷³ Angelica will undo this good first impression, however, by betraying her rustic origins when she laughs coarsely at a risqué joke told by Tancredi, much to the family's annoyance.

This example from *The Leopard* is not unique. In both his historic and his contemporary films, Visconti constantly places bouquets onscreen as *repoussoirs*. This is done in conjunction with actors who walk behind them or who create a compositional unity with them. Angelica's introduction is paralleled by Tadzio's mother in *Death in Venice*. She also enters from the right and walks to the centre-front, passing a bunch of purple-blue, potted hydrangeas, which perfectly match the colour of her dress: mauve, an artificial colour invented in the mid-nineteenth century and greatly *en vogue* during the *fin de siècle*.³⁷⁴

In *L'innocente* (1976), hydrangeas are prominently displayed in the Tuscan house of Tullio's mother (Rina Morelli), the Villa La Badiola near Lucca. During a visit, when Tullio and his mother enter, they pass a hydrangea bouquet that is strikingly placed in the foreground. When Tullio's wife, Giuliana, arrives later through the doorway on the terrace, we see the hydrangeas again on the left but also field bouquets on the right. The room seems to be full of flowers though the hydrangeas match the pink hues of Giuliana's dress. The film's widescreen format lends emphasis, accentuating the staging in depth, but also giving additional information on the character and the idyllic situation. Besides *repoussoirs* and depth cues, flowers denote social environments and fashions and can also give specific narrative information, as Tosi pointed out above.

Flower bouquets regularly work as *repoussoir* in *L'innocente*. When Tullio's mistress, Teresa, is at the centre of a group of men during a musical evening, we can see – left in the image and *out of focus* – a large bouquet of roses that almost fills half of the screen. Everywhere in this scene stiffly arranged roses have been placed, their rigidity matching the stiffness of the interior, the clothes, and the poses of the aristocratic audience. The tightly arranged bouquets contrast with the more casual flowers of the field and hydrangea bouquets at the Villa La Badiola. Thus, bouquets serve not only as formal depth cues but also as narrative props: Visconti uses them to indicate different, contrasting environments. When Giuliana walks in the garden of her country house, Villalilla, we see her body blocked and filtered by branches of blooming lilacs, emphasising the romantic mood. In the film's final scene, Tullio takes Teresa to his home for the first time. Both in the hallway and in the drawing room large bouquets of white chrysanthemums catch the eye – the chrysanthemum being very popular in the second half of the nineteenth century.³⁷⁵ While Teresa inspects the rooms, two pots with white chrysanthemums

373 Ibid.

374 In the 1890s mauve was associated with homosexuality. See: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mauve>.

375 In the novel by D'Annunzio, the basis for the film, references to chrysanthemums are often made. See D'Annunzio, *The Intruder* (2009). Initially, when Tullio is observing Giuliana as she prepares to go to her lover, he falls in love with her again and chrysanthemums in her room are used as metaphors for his delight: 'A large bouquet of white chrysanthemums, placed on the table, reached up as far as her shoulder'. (p. 32) and 'How beautiful those white chrysanthemums were that were on Giuliana's table just now! I will go and buy a heap more just like them'. (p. 38) Later, when Giuliana has given birth to her illegitimate child, Tullio compares Giuliana's pallor with the pallor of a bouquet of chrysanthemums she receives from the doctor: 'They had the color of a sickly, bloodless, and almost ...

are foregrounded and continuously fill a large part of the frame throughout this sequence.

The Leopard, *Death in Venice* and *L'innocente* are not the only films in which Visconti uses flowers as *repoussoirs*. From the early 1960s it pervades his entire oeuvre. In the *Il lavoro* episode of *Boccaccio '70* (1962) bouquets of white and red flower branches (presumably white foxglove and red gladioli) figure prominently in the apartment. In the opening scene of *Vaghe stelle dell'Orsa*, the camera films the protagonist, Sandra, and her friends from a low level through a sleek vase with gladioli in it. They even block our view for a moment. The gladioli match the clean, modernist interior (Geneva), in contrast to the baroque, ruinous, and dark surroundings of Volterra where most of the film is set. The flowers that Sandra encounters in the Volterra villa are of a different kind, just as in *L'innocente*. The housekeeper tells her that the bouquet was given by her stepfather, Gilardini (Renzo Ricci), thus giving it a narrative function. The actress is here obscured by the bouquet for a moment. Sandra switches from delight to rage, tearing the bouquet's card, as she considers Gilardini her foe.

In *Death in Venice*, Visconti incorporates a self-referential pun at his tendency to use flowers to block the sight of his characters. Sitting in the dining room, Aschenbach subtly moves a little flower vase with freesias sideways to better spy on Tadzio, a boy whom he has just 'discovered' in the hotel sitting room, and who has responded to his gaze. Not only is the viewer obstructed at first, the main character himself has to push aside the flowers to look at his 'object of desire'. In the subsequent medium close shot of Aschenbach, a piece of the bouquet is still visible, so that we are reminded of the barrier, but the flowers now also work as *repoussoir*.

In the opening scene of *The Damned*, during the birthday dinner for Joachim von Essenbeck, we see carnations out of focus in the foreground, which add a pink element to the otherwise dark blue background and the white and gold dinner table in the middle ground. Later, when his daughter-in-law, Sophie, visits her cousin, the SS officer Aschenbach (Helmut Griem), in his clean room, there is vase with calla flowers (a kind of arum lily) that correspond to the sleek, modern interior and the stiffness of Aschenbach's costume and behaviour. In the 1930s and early 1940s arum lilies were apparently popular flowers.³⁷⁶ They stand prominently in the foreground in Jean Renoir's *La règle du jeu* (*The Rules of the Game*, 1939), during a dialogue between the aristocrat, Robert (Marcel Dalio), and his friend, Octave (Jean Renoir). In *Tosca* (Carl Koch/Jean Renoir, 1941), for which Visconti served as assistant-director, callas reappear in Tosca's music room even though the film is set in 1800. In *Cavalleria* (Goffredo Alessandrini, 1936) a whip pan to the left from the protagonists Umberto (Amedeo Nazzari) and Speranza (Elisa Cegani) reveals a bunch of calla flowers during an aristocratic concert. The image then

...lifeless skin, the livid noticeable whiteness on the cheeks of beggars benumbed by the cold'. (p. 191). The chrysanthemums remind Tullio of the adultery just as he remembers the aria she sang on that fateful day exactly one year before, 'Che faro senza Eurydice' by Christoph Willibald von Gluck's opera *Orfeo ed Eurydice* (1762). The aria plays a part in the film as well, even much more than the flowers. One could already speak here of Proustian associations, even if Proust published the first volume of his *Recherche* in 1913, years after D'Annunzio's novel (1892).

³⁷⁶ For calla as typical flowers of the 1930s, see e.g., 'Gusto nell'arredamento', *Tempo* IV, 36, 1-2-1940, pp. 11-14. On p. 14 a typical 1930s interior is depicted.



Fig. 70. *The Damned* (Luchino Visconti 1969).

dissolves to a shot of a flower stall in the Piazza di Spagna. The camera pans slightly to the right, so that the Spanish Steps that Umberto ascends to greet Speranza come into view. The rigid arum lilies form an aristocratic contrast with the more popular, colourful flowers from the stall. Not for nothing, Speranza's favourite kind of flower is sold there: lily-of-the-valley (*mughetto*), an important motif throughout the film. Speranza has accepted a marriage of convenience, but cannot forget her lover who named his horse after her favourite flowers. Likewise, he saves her lily-of-the-valley in his cigarette case. Arum lilies, moreover, are symbols of death, so intentionally or not they receive this connotation in these scenes, if not of actual death than at least of stasis.

In the aforementioned scene from *The Damned*, the callas briefly block our view of Sophie when she leaves Aschenbach, recalling the floral obstructions in *Vaghe stelle dell'Orsa* and *L'innocente*. These blockages are moments in which, using Stoichita's terminology, *parergon* becomes *ergon* (the seemingly unimportant foregrounded depth cues become the centre of attention). This is similar to Stoichita's historical development of the still life, from *parergon* within religious imagery into a self-sustaining *ergon* in which the still life itself encompasses the whole representation. We are dealing with a typical *cinematic* version here, however, because the blockage occurs only through the actors' movement within the *mise en scène* or through the mobile framing of the camera (see the end of this chapter, and Chapter 9 on mobile framing). When the flowers do not obstruct our view, they remain *parergon* – subordinate to, but in relationship with, the characters, even as a kind of contrast. Stoichita indicates that already in ancient rhetoric *parergon* stood for the ornaments added to a discourse. Art theory in the seventeenth century adopted this meaning. Stoichita also cites Jacques Derrida's definition: 'A *parergon* is against, next to, and extra to the *ergon*, the work done, the fact, the work of art but it is not lost, from a specific exterior it touches and cooperates within the operation. It is neither simply exterior nor simply within. It is like an accessory which we are obliged to accommodate alongside and inside'.³⁷⁷ We usually are dealing with *parergon* in Visconti's films because the characters

³⁷⁷ Stoichita 2015, p. 61. Originally in: Jacques Derrida, *La Vérité en peinture* (Paris: Flammarion, 1978), p. 63.

generally remain partially visible behind flowers; when they conceal them totally, *parergon* can briefly become *ergon*. In both cases, however, there is cooperation and interaction, as Derrida suggests. Derrida's formulation of 'neither exterior or simply within' fits perfectly with Visconti's diegetic use of objects, of narrating the film simultaneously in the first and the third persons.

The history of the popularity and the meaning of flowers have been excellently discussed by Jack Goody in *The Culture of Flowers* (1993).³⁷⁸ He explains how, beginning in the early nineteenth century, literature arose around the *language of flowers*. An 'invention of tradition'³⁷⁹, as Goody suggests, that involved etiquette, religion, science, and mysticism. The established rules governing which flowers were appropriate in specific settings, however, did not often correspond to their daily use. Yet, Goody asserts that we can still establish a sense of the meaning of flowers within European and American thinking – some flowers like chrysanthemums and carnations could not become gifts because, unlike in China, chrysanthemums were seen in the Catholic West as funeral flowers while carnations could attract the Evil Eye.³⁸⁰ To what extent was Visconti aware of existing *codes* in his use of flowers? From his films, one can deduce that he was very aware of floral *fashions* for certain decades or eras. Unfortunately, as Goody has attested, we lack a history of floral fashions; he did not intend to trace it in *The Culture of Flowers*.³⁸¹ An anecdote told by Tosi, though, may confirm how Visconti used flowers to express the meaning of a scene or a character, deliberately using different, even contrasting, objects within the same space to express conflict.

Senso contains a scene of betrayal and corruption. It was filmed in a salon at the Villa Godi dedicated to the muses and poets, the Sala delle Muse e dei Poeti, with frescoes (c. 1565) by Battista del Moro (see also Chapter 2).³⁸² Here Livia gives the freedom fighters' money to her lover, Franz, so that he may bribe a doctor, desert the army and escape an impending battle. The divine figures on the sixteenth-century frescoes on the wall contrast sharply with the squalid drama occurring right in front of them. As Tosi describes, 'When she comes up with the cash box and everything falls out of her hands, we are in a yellow room, where the walls are covered with frescoes by Veronese [sic] and, in contrast, the decoration is nineteenth-century, the curtains of Neo-Gothic yellow silk, the yellow ottoman, and chairs are really in Empire style, this saffron yellow, the furniture matching the style of the period, and this in this sixteenth-century room. There is also, however, an eighteenth-century writing desk against the wall from which Livia takes out some paper. On the top of the desk there is a small vase. At the time, Gino Brosio, the

378 Jack Goody, *The Culture of Flowers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

379 Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

380 Goody 1993, p. 290-2, 296-8.

381 Goody to the author, 7 June 2009.

382 Del Moro was slightly older than Paolo Veronese, but Tosi confuses him with the more famous Veronese, who decorated Palladio's Villa Barbaro in Maser. When Visconti filmed in Lugo, the villa was called Villa Valmarana and was owned by the Counts Valmarana. The frescoes by Gualtiero Padovano, Battista del Moro and Battista Zelotti were made between the 1540s and 1560s. In 1962 the villa was purchased by Prof. Remo Malinverni, who had it restored. Since then the villa carries its current name. For Battista del Moro, see [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/d-angolo-battista-detto-del-moro-dal-moro-moro_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/d-angolo-battista-detto-del-moro-dal-moro-moro_(Dizionario-Biografico)/).



Fig. 71. *Senso* (Luchino Visconti 1954).

set dresser, showed me a charming vase of little roses he had picked in the garden, a poor vase compared with the frescoes: “Look”, he proudly said to me, “what a grace this vase has!” When Visconti entered, however, he found that vase terrible and he yelled at poor Brosio: he had wanted a romantic bouquet, even though he had not told him so the day before. I saw the poor man crying and quickly getting up to leave for Vicenza to get another bouquet. I didn’t ask myself then, but I did later on. It was because it had to be more explicit. This shows Visconti’s culture – he was born into that world. When he came and saw that vase, he said: “No, it should be more. That vase should be blatantly nineteenth century, ugly romantic, the opposite of Veronese”. Visconti wanted... the interplay between these different styles to be more explicit: the Neo-Gothic curtains, the eighteenth-century writing desk, and that nineteenth-century vase, hideously nineteenth-century relative to the classicism of the Veronese frescoes’.³⁸³

When we compare Visconti’s use of bouquets as *repoussoirs* with painting, it turns out that there are remarkably few counterparts. One of the few is by Giuseppe De Nittis, *The Salon of Princess Mathilde* (1883, Museo Civico, Barletta). In the right foreground, we see a remarkably large bouquet of pink rhododendrons in an orange heart while the people sit or stand further away. The bouquet does not fill a third or half of the picture, as sometimes occurs in Visconti.³⁸⁴ In other nineteenth-century paintings, bouquets are more prominent but the *repoussoir* function is not as strong, and the flowers do not hamper the view of the main figures. Edgar

383 Interview with Tosi, 14 May 2004.

384 At first sight the woman looks separated from everyone else, but on her right her partner is sitting, whose head is cut off by a lampshade à la Degas. To their right, a curtain hangs, recalling the stage-like curtains in Vermeer.

Degas's *Woman with Chrysanthemums* (1865, Museum of Modern Art, New York) shows a half-figure of a woman leaning against a table upon which is a vase of flowers. The bouquet fills half of the picture and is fully visible in comparison to the woman but it adds little depth and does not block our view of her.

The use of flowers, plants, and trees as *repoussoir* was already prominent in thirties cinema, especially in Jean Renoir's films such as *La règle du jeu*. *La règle du jeu* is a film that often plays with deep staging through the use of flowers as well as other objects. Early in the film the marquis considers breaking up with his mistress Geneviève (Mila Parély) to reassert his marital fidelity. Their dialogue takes place in front of a large arrangement of gladioli, where he expresses his discomfort and his perfectionism by picking up the dead flowers. Renoir used plants and trees as depth cues also in combination with mobile framing. In *Les bas-fonds* (*The Lower Depths*, 1936), based on Maxim Gorky's story, we see the two main characters talking to each other, filtered through the foliage of a beer garden. Pepel (Jean Gabin) has just rescued his girlfriend, Natacha (Junie Astor), from an unsuitable suitor to whom her stepfather had betrothed her. The camera behaves almost like a voyeur, slowly sneaking closer. In the same way, *L'innocente* has a point-of-view shot of Tullio arriving at his mother's villa in an open carriage, with tree branches partially covering the building until we come in sufficiently close. In the opening images of *The Leopard*, during which the title credits are shown, the camera slowly pans to the villa, passing trees, the gate of the estate, shrubs, and marble busts, simultaneously going up, down, and forward (by the obvious use of a crane). This is quite comparable to *Les bas-fonds*. Unlike *L'innocente*, though, this is not a point-of-view shot but one where, just as in Renoir, the camera operates as an independent observer outside the film's characters. The passing of the foliage, combined with a curved, forward track, reminiscent of the dolly shots in *Cabiria* (Giovanni Pastrone, 1914), conveys a large three-dimensional and dynamic sense. The branches in the foreground are dark while the estate's gate and the distant house stand in the light; our attention is thus drawn via the middle plane to the background, to the story's location. But we reach that location slowly and only after following a scenic trajectory (see Chapter 9 for an analysis of the mobile framing), similar to the opening scene of Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* (1941). It isn't only in Renoir, but also in his countrymen, that we find the phenomenon of blocking and filtering by flowers and plants. For example, in *À nous la liberté* (*Freedom for Us*, René Clair, 1931), in the record factory director Émile's (Henry Marchand), modernist interior, a vase of flowers obstructs our view of him when he runs behind it. We see him only in the reflection of a huge wall mirror – typical interior design fixtures in the thirties – that doubles the vase of flowers. The man himself is offscreen just past frame right.

Josef von Sternberg, the Austrian-American director, made the strongest use of blocking and filtering. In *Morocco* (1930), Tom Brown (Gary Cooper) is in a bar, looking up at Amy Jolly (Marlene Dietrich) performing on stage. Blades of a palm tree in left frame cover part of Cooper's body and act as a depth cue, as Visconti will later do. The plant seems to be only a formal device – to create depth and to orient the viewers to the bar's location. More notable is the blocking and filtering in *Blonde Venus* (1932). Here von Sternberg emphatically plays with

the viewer's gaze. When Helen Jones (Dietrich) performs in a cabaret, we first see the dense glitter curtain. We see her coming through, but palm branches in the foreground cover part of her body. Then she walks to the right while the camera follows her in a lateral tracking shot. Potted palms in front of the actress filter the view of her and sometimes even cover her completely. Von Sternberg's purpose is to show and *not* to show his star, making her both literally and figuratively distant and out of reach. The palms create distance but also a kind of voyeurism: you want to get closer but you cannot. It is as if the camera is afraid to be discovered. The plant serves as *repoussoir* here more explicitly than in *Morocco*, increasing the eroticism and glamour by adding this voyeuristic dimension. *We* are made part of the audience in the film's story, listening to and gazing at Dietrich's show, while we also look *directly* at the star without seeing her audience. Diegetic and non-diegetic intermingle, we watch the film in the first and third persons simultaneously.

Other *repoussoirs*: bars, curtains, chairs. Functions and autonomy of objects

Visconti did not only use flowers as *repoussoirs*. All kinds of objects may be used to create depth such as lamps or statues. Sometimes these strike us because of their luminosity (the gas lamps in *L'innocente*) or because of their size (a giant lampshade in *Conversation Piece*'s opening scene). Objects may be shot out of focus to direct the viewer to what really matters within the image. In the cinema of the thirties and early forties foregrounded objects shot out of focus became a conventional motif. The use of deep focus, where the foreground and background are in focus simultaneously, would only be introduced in the late thirties. When investigating Visconti's staging in depth, his use of bars in car windows, fences, and stairs, as well as of furniture and curtains is striking. This demands an examination into the existing ideas about and interpretations of Visconti's use of objects.

Ossessione opens with a subjective, point-of-view shot through a truck's windshield while the credits roll. The truck is moving fast over a dyke along a river. While we seem to be looking through the driver's eyes, he is relatively insignificant in the narrative. The bars of the window remind us that we are in a vehicle, though our view constantly changes. Thus the depth of the view through the windshield is dynamic while the framing of the window bars remains static. This creates a kinetic entity, similar to the foliage at the beginning of *The Leopard*. We identify with those who look through the windshield and, as in *The Leopard*, we are drawn into the location and the story. Nevertheless, there is a barrier between our eye and the fictional view through the window which prevents us from speaking of a *real* point-of-view shot – in which *repoussoirs* are often absent in order to increase the suggestion of subjectivity. So here too we are dealing with an ambiguous situation, in which both first and third person point-of-views are combined. Rather, we are dealing with a kind of frame within a frame, analogous to Stoichita's analysis of early modern art, yet appropriate to the cinematic medium.



Fig. 72. *Osessione* (Luchino Visconti 1943). Fig. 73. *Le dernier tournant* (Pierre Chenal 1939).



Fig. 74. *Fari nella nebbia* (Gianni Franciolini 1942). Fig. 75. *Fari nella nebbia* (Gianni Franciolini 1942).



Fig. 76. *Quattro passi fra le nuvole* (Alessandro Blasetti 1942). Fig. 77. *Quai des brumes* (Marcel Carné 1938).

The view through the windshield as the opening shot was a popular motif around 1940.³⁸⁵ We also find it at the beginning of three other films prior to *Ossessione*. The opening images of the thriller, *Le dernier tournant* (*The Last Turn*, Pierre Chenal, 1939), the truckers' drama *Fari nella nebbia* ([*Headlights in the Fog*], Gianni Franciolini, 1942), and the rural comedy *Quattro passi fra le nuvole* (*A Walk in the Clouds*, Alessandro Blasetti, 1942) are shot from a truck driver's point-of-view of the road ahead. In *Fari nella nebbia*, it is the two protagonists' point-of-view: the trucker, Cesare (Fosco Giachetti) and his mate, Gianni (Mario Siletti). We do not see the depth cues from the windshield as clearly as in *Ossessione's* opening shot. *Fari nella nebbia* does provide depth cues later on, when Cesare and Gianni pick up the stranded young woman, Piera (Luisa Ferida). In *Quattro passi fra le nuvole*, the window bars don't frame the road; instead it is a direct view. Visconti most likely had not seen *Le dernier tournant* because it was not released in Italy before the war and he may have left Paris in early 1939. *Fari nella nebbia* came out in Italy on 15 February 1942,³⁸⁶ making it probable that Visconti saw it. That also goes for *Quattro passi fra le nuvole*, which was released on 23 December 1942, although Visconti was already editing *Ossessione* by then.³⁸⁷

Along with *Fari nella nebbia*, *Ossessione* has been compared to the films of Marcel Carné, particularly *Quai des brumes* (*Port of Shadows*, 1938) and rightly so.³⁸⁸ In the latter film, after hitchhiking by truck, an itinerant young man (a deserter) arrives in the port city of Le Havre – also the location (perhaps not coincidentally) of Renoir's *La bête humaine* (1938). As in *Ossessione*, the outsider, Jean (Jean Gabin), starts a relationship with a young woman, Nelly (Michèle Morgan), who lives with her loathsome aging guardian, Zabel (Michel Simon). When Zabel tries to rape her, Jean kills him. Similar to the Visconti film, the young protagonist wants to travel, here on a ship bound for South America. Like *Ossessione's* Gino, Jean decides not to flee because he is in love with Nelly. But the place also seems to detain him because of his deed: he who kills will literally not get away. The image under the opening credits of a ship chained to the port seems to symbolize this – it will eventually sail without Jean. Just like Gino, Jean goes

385 In *Ekstase* (*Ecstasy*, 1932) by Gustav Machaty – the man with whom Visconti could have begun his career, according to Gianni Rondolino's biography of Visconti – we see through a windshield, when Emil (Zvonimir Rogoz), the clueless husband of the protagonist, Eva (Hedy Lamarr), offers a lift to her lover, Adam (Aribert Mog). We see Adam walk towards the car, through the windshield of Emil's car, suggesting the point of view of the driver. Earlier on, the film contains shots with *repoussoirs* filmed out of focus, where there is no point-of-view. When Eva finally rejects Emil, we can see her on the back, facing her husband. They are filmed through the bars of what might be the marital bed, referring to the sex she has just had with her lover and which her husband deprived her of before. Rondolino (2006), pp. 52-3. NB Michelangelo Antonioni would repeat Visconti's opening shot from the truck towards the dyke and the house in *Il grido* (*The Cry*, 1957), only now the protagonist Aldo (Steve Cochran) and his daughter are sitting on top of the truck.

386 <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0033588/releaseinfo>. Review by Mario Gromo in *La Stampa*, 21 March 1942. *Fari nella nebbia* was also shown abroad: in the Netherlands from December 1942 and in France from June 1943.

387 *Ossessione* premiered on 16 May 1943 in Rome.

388 Lunardo [Eugenio Ferdinando Palmieri], 'Il cappello in testa', *Film*, 26 June 1943. See also <http://ricercavisconti.wordpress.com/2009/12/25/ossessione-1943-recensioni-progetti/>. Lino Micciché also cites the comparison with *Quai des brumes*. He refers in turn to Giorgio Ferrara. Lino Micciché, *Visconti e il neorealismo. Ossessione, La terra trema, Bellissima*, (Venezia: Marsilio, 1998), p. 68, Giorgio Ferrara, *Luchino Visconti*. Cinéma d'aujourd'hui (Paris: Editions Seghers, 1963), pp. 16-17.

to meet his fate, being shot by Lucien, a petty criminal, whom he has repeatedly humiliated, leaving Nelly all alone.

Stylistically, the comparison of the Visconti and Carné films merits a closer look. In *Quai des brumes*, the opening scene does not consist of one long take as in *Ossessione*. As the opening credits roll, we see a static night and a foggy image of a ship in a harbour. The following shot is a close up of a stone bearing the words, 'Le Havre 20 km.', so we can place the location right away. Then we see a dark shot and a van approaching us on a rainy road. As it drives past, the camera follows along, and we see it driving away over the wet, shiny, and unlit road. This is followed by a shot from outside the bus where we see a small driver (Marcel Peres) behind the windshield. The wiper goes up and down. The bus moves towards us. The next shot shows the driver's point-of-view: the unlit road illuminated by his headlights. He's forced to brake abruptly because, suddenly, Jean stands in the middle of the road hitchhiking. The driver picks him up and drops him off in Le Havre. They argue along the road, but eventually make up and the driver gives Jean his pack of cigarettes as a conciliatory gesture. In the point-of-view shot through the windshield, the depth cues are quite striking: the window wiper and the bars we see clearly in the outside shot when we see the driver. On the other hand, the wiper is absent in the shots when we see Jean and the driver sitting together. Apparently the director felt that these cues distracted too much from the dialogue and the scene's emotional tone. In short, we are dealing with an entirely different visual scheme, editing, and introduction of the main character than in *Ossessione*. In the Visconti film, Gino is not a deserter but a stowaway on the truck. We do not see his face when he is discovered. By use of camera positions, the actor's positions and the hat on his head, we do not see Gino's face for several minutes until he has entered the pub and walked into the kitchen, attracted by Giovanna's song. 'Can you eat here?' he asks. After some quiet shots of Gino surveying his surroundings, Visconti shocks us. We first get a medium close shot introducing Giovanna. She lifts up her head, quickly captivated, and then we take in her object of desire: the camera quickly tracks forward to Gino's face. *He* is the object of desire, the camera seems to say, more than she is. The whole sequence, moreover, is shot in the daytime and not in the dead of night as in *Quai des brumes*.³⁸⁹

Visconti makes use of bars as *repoussoir* with shots of fences, stairs and door- and window bars. In *Ossessione's* opening scene the driver stands on the dyke, calling down to Giovanna's husband, Bragana, to give them gasoline. The fence around this road often returns as a marker and depth cue throughout the film. The bars in the stairs in *Vaghe stelle dell'Orsa* are only depth cues, not *repoussoirs*, when Sandra, her hair pinned up in the neoclassical manner – possibly a late echo of Visconti's first film project³⁹⁰ – descends through a large iron spiral staircase to the subterranean vaults, a landscape reminiscent of Cocteau's underworld in *Orphée*, where her brother Gianni, who is incestuously attracted to her, awaits. We

389 The postponed introduction has a strong resemblance with that of the antagonist in *Tosca* by Koch and Renoir. See also Ivo Blom, "Mit nur einem Blick perfide sein". Carl Koch, Jean Renoir, Luchino Visconti und *Tosca*', in Francesco Bono, Johannes Roschla, eds., *Tenöre, Touristen, Gastarbeiter. Deutsch-italienische Filmbeziehungen* (München: edition text & kritik/Cinegraph, 2011), pp. 80-92.

390 Schifano 2009, p. 183.

see her lower back through the bars as she descends. After she has refused Gianni's proposal, he looks down in the water and sees – like us – Sandra walking back up the stairs in the reflection. She has literally become inaccessible to him. The stairs and railings indicate the increasing distance between them.

Nowhere is the use of bars as *repoussoir* more dominant, however, than in Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's *Der letzte Mann* (*The Last Laugh*, 1924).³⁹¹ The film opens with a high-angle vertical pan shot from a descending hotel elevator. We look into the lobby through the railings. The door opens, the elevator operator steps aside, guests step out into the lobby and the camera travels with them. Then, we follow a tracking shot through the crowded lobby towards the revolving door that connects the inside with the outside. The camera stops right in front of the door, which is kept in continuous motion by a valet. Through the revolving door's bars, we look outside and gain our first indirect acquaintance with the film's protagonist, a hotel doorman (Emil Jannings). The shot is relatively long, enabling us to scrutinize the space beyond the door. Only then do we get a third shot from outside where we see the doorman again, but the view of him is filtered through an oncoming taxi. Through the taxi's window, though, we can still see his face. As the revolving doors are made of glass, we see characters filtered through their bars such as when the doorman encounters his replacement for the first time. This filtering happens most strikingly through the bars and grooves of the manager's office windows. Murnau films both from the lobby into the room, when the doorman gets his termination letter, and from inside to outside, when the manager exits after having caught the doorman drinking on the job. The latter has just carried inside a huge suitcase on his back by himself, though this does not seem to impress the manager. Later in the film, it is mainly the swinging doors into the washrooms that work as filters. Not only are they dynamic in their movements but are made of transparent glass so that we can see the characters going through them (see Chapters 8 and 9 for framing and mobile framing in *Der letzte Mann*).

In the visual arts, we encounter people watching through grilles and bars, especially in such Impressionist paintings as Édouard Manet's *Le balcon* (1868-1869, Musée d'Orsay, Paris) where we see two women and a man standing on a balcony filtered through the bars of the railing.³⁹² Usually when balconies are represented in paintings, the view is from the inside looking out, so that the figures are not obscured and are often depicted from the back as in Gustave Caillebotte's *Homme au balcon* (1880, private collection, Switzerland), a perspective that we also see regularly in films (see also chapter 8). A painter who regularly used blocking or filtering of figures, not so much through flowers as by other objects, is the French Impressionist, Edgar Degas. In several of his paintings and pastels individuals are partially covered by poles, columns or furniture. In *Women at a Café. Evening* (1877, Musée d'Orsay, Paris), some women are intersected by the frames around the café windows. In *At the Milliner's* (1882, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), the saleswoman is half hidden by the mirror standing prominently on the

391 Murnau reveals this obsession with bars in doors and windows also in other films such as *Sunrise* (1927).

392 The painting appropriates Goya's *Majas on a balcony* (c.1812-1835, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) and in its turn was appropriated by René Magritte's parody *Perspective II: Manet's Balcony* (1950, Museum van Schone Kunsten, Ghent).

right side of the image. Because he cuts off his characters through such blocking, Degas might be considered as a 'proto – cinematic' nineteenth-century painter.³⁹³

There is one particularly strong Impressionist example, however, that goes even further: Caillebotte's *View from a Balcony* (1888, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam). Here the balcony railing itself has become the subject. The view of the city below – here from inside to outside – is filtered through the bars. So dominant is the balcony grid and so much space does it take up in the representation that the painting calls into the question the necessity of the cityscape itself. The background seems more an afterthought, painted only to strengthen the sense of depth. Visconti did not go to this extreme, but he still composed some striking shots that were filtered through bars.

We often encounter curtains as theatrical effects and as *repoussoir* in Visconti's films, even modestly in *Ossessione*. When Gino walks up the embankment after a big party in Giovanna's trattoria, we see a drapery on the left of the image, even though it is only a simple piece of cloth. In the foreground we see the *parergon* of a still life of the party's end: empty bottles, plates, and food scraps. In the background Gino, seen from the back, walks along the dyke. A pole intersects the image almost vertically, like a curtain's edge, so that the image is divided into three vertical parts: the curtain on the left, Gino on the road, and the river on the right. In *L'innocente*, Giuliana arrives on the balcony of Tullio's mother's villa, closing her umbrella. We look out at her from the open doors of a salon. The doorway's large trussed curtains are not only the usual elements of an upper-class interior circa 1890, but also frame Giuliana as well, this being emphasized further by the light on the balcony and the dark salon. They form the threshold from inside to outside (for windows and framing, see chapter 8). While in *L'innocente* the curtain hangs at middle ground, making it only a depth cue and *not a repoussoir*, in *The Leopard* it functions as such.

Curtains create depth and volume, especially when they move. Visconti was apparently very fond of this because billowing curtains recur in several films.³⁹⁴ It is particularly noteworthy at the beginning of *The Leopard*. The camera approaches the Salina's villa until we see an open balcony where we hear the sound of people praying an Ave Maria. The balcony fence, the canopy, and the moving curtains give depth to the image. In the next shot, the camera is positioned diagonally opposite the balcony to maximize the three-dimensional feeling. When the wind blows the curtain inwards, we can look inside and see the people praying, connecting the off-screen sound to them. The curtain leads our gaze and opens our view onto the characters as in Vermeer's paintings (see below): though not a stage curtain, it comes close to being one. In the next shot, the camera is in the room, while to the left we still see the curtains through which sunlight streams. The curtain now points us to the off-screen space outside. It is as if the curtain has been our means of transport – and a time machine as well – to move us from outside to

393 Even if that is quite a teleological statement. In Pierre Bonnard's *La toilette* (1914, Musée d'Orsée, Paris) a naked woman is standing in front of a mirror. Here too the image is vertically intersected.

394 According to Giuseppe Rotunno, director of photography of *The Leopard* and other films by Visconti, the director was obsessed by movement within the image. The fluttering curtains provided an 'aria andante'. Interview with Rotunno, 20 April 2004.



Fig. 78 – 83. *The Leopard*
(Luchino Visconti 1963).

inside, from our present situation to the historical past. After we observe the family whose father is leading the prayer, we see the backs of the household staff, who are praying as well, in a subsequent shot from an adjoining room. Here too, the off-screen space is suggested by a billowing curtain through which the sun shines. Though the actors barely move, Visconti achieves dynamism with the moving curtains, which differentiates this style from pictorial depictions of curtains in Vermeer or De Hooch.

Indeed, the strongest play with depth cues and *repoussoirs* in painting is to be found in the seventeenth-century Dutch genre painting of Johannes Vermeer and Pieter de Hooch.³⁹⁵ In their works, curtains, and other pieces of furniture, such as tables and chairs, are used continuously to stage depth on the flat canvas. The furniture and curtains are always in front of the person portrayed. In Vermeer's *Lady Standing at a Virginal* (c.1670-1673, National Gallery, London), the upper part of a chair in the right foreground is closer to the viewer than the woman depicted. In *Lady Seated at a Virginal* (c.1670-1675, National Gallery, London), a prominent cello is placed in the bottom left foreground and we can see part of a curtain in the top left, both of which function as *repoussoir*. In Vermeer's *Die Malkunst*, also known as *Schilderconst*, *Allegory of Painting* and *The Artist's Studio* (1666, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna), again a foregrounded curtain and chair work as *repoussoirs* and lead our gaze to the middle- and background. The backlight on the chair and the curtain assists in directing the viewer to the middle plane where the painter is seated and to the background where the woman probably stands next to a window (given the light source from the left). Moreover, the curtain provides a dramatisation of the scene, as though we were looking at a *tableau vivant*. This effect was often used by seventeenth century painters such as in Rembrandt's *Holy Family* (1646, Museum Schloss Wilhelmshöhe, Kassel) in which the painted curtain seems to hang as a kind of *trompe l'oeil*, partially over the Biblical scene.³⁹⁶ Vermeer suggests the viewer's own off-screen space in front of the theatrical curtains, as well as the space outside the frame, by the light falling sideways through windows. Sometimes the window is visible, sometimes only suggested, but hardly is it ever concealed by curtains. The suggestion of off-screen space through curtains is present in the paintings of later centuries, particularly in Adolf von Menzel's *Das Balkonzimmer* (1845, National Gallery, Berlin). Here the human figure is absent. The sunlight through the curtains, the light beams on the floor and the billowing of the curtains suggest the outside and wind as the mirror in the closet indicates off-frame space inside the chamber (see Chapter 10

395 For a revisionist perspective on De Hooch's interior scenes, see Heidi de Mare, *Huiselijke taferelen. De veranderende rol van het beeld in de Gouden Eeuw* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2012) and her dissertation, *Het huis en de regels van het denken. Een cultuurhistorisch onderzoek naar het werk van Simon Stevin, Jacob Cats en Pieter De Hooch* (Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit, 2003).

396 Vermeer himself used the curtain as *repoussoir* quite often, as in his *Allegory of Faith* (c.1670-2, Metropolitan Museum, New York) and *Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window* (c. 1659, Gemäldegalerie, Dresden). Visconti might have known the work of Vermeer well, either by books and catalogues, or because of his visits to museums – he was an avid visitor of museums and galleries as his collaborators confirmed in interviews. He visited Amsterdam in 1955, moreover, and probably visited the Rijksmuseum, as art postcards from the Rijksmuseum collection, now at the Fondo Visconti, confirm. This collection also includes cards from Vermeer's work elsewhere, such as the *Allegory of Painting*.



Fig. 84 (left). Johannes Vermeer, *Die Malkunst* (1666). Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.
 Fig. 85 (right). Adolf von Menzel, *Das Balkonzimmer* (1845). National Gallery, Berlin.



Fig. 86 (left). *Ossessione* (Luchino Visconti 1943). Fig. 87 (right). *Vaghe stelle dell'Orsa* (Luchino Visconti 1965).

on mirrors, also in closets). On the other hand the curtain is not prominently foregrounded here as in Vermeer's work or in *The Leopard*. It looks more like the moment in *Senso* when the dawn shines through the transparent curtains, even if the room is not bathed in light as in von Menzel's scene.

Besides the real curtain, transparent curtains also work as a strong *repoussoir* or depth cue: we see the actor but filtered. This creates not only depth but also mental distance between the viewer and the character. In *Ossessione*, Gino accompanies Anita to her home in Ferrara. Lying on her bed, we watch him through a gauze curtain as though it were a veil. In *Senso*, Franz appears like a ghost to Livia. When he is in her bedroom, she sits down on the bed to recover from the shock. While we see Franz on the left of the image through a translucent curtain, making him even more phantom-like, we also see him reflected in a mirror against the back wall, doubling the ghost-like effect (for mirrors in *Senso*, see also Chapter 10). In *Vaghe stelle dell'Orsa*, the camera films Sandra through a gauze bed curtain. Her

face is covered, rendering her anonymous. Her husband, Andrew (Michael Craig), with whom she is becoming ever more distant, is on the left. Behind them stands the statue of Cupid and Psyche where Sandra has exchanged secret notes with her brother. She has just found another one but does not share her secrets with her husband. The picture is symbolic of the growing distance between the couple (in Chapter 6 we already noticed that veils on faces can also symbolize distancing).

This kind of semi-translucent curtain that creates distance between the viewer and the character is already present in Gustav Machaty's film *Ekstase/Ecstasy* (1932), which suggests voyeurism and eroticism, and also in von Sternberg's films. When Gary Cooper's character in *Morocco* looks at Dietrich's Amy Jolly in her dressing room, we first see her filmed through a beaded curtain which she then steps through. First she is a shape and only afterwards recognisable as an individual. As previously noted, Dietrich in *Blonde Venus* passes a large glitter curtain before she starts to sing. Later, she runs through a beaded curtain in a pub where she eludes her pursuer, a detective hired by her ex-husband to take her child away from her. She subsequently walks through a cloud of smoke that renders her only half-visible. Her hat creates distance too, like Gino's in *Ossessione*, so it takes time for the detective to discover her. The difference with *Ossessione* is that we do not know who Gino is – what we call *restricted narration* – while in *Blonde Venus* it is clear to us, though not to the detective, who she is, thereby creating suspense.

With the rediscovery of seventeenth century painting in the nineteenth century, new examples of furniture as *repoussoir* and depth cue in painting appeared. In Ettore Tito's *Le sartine* (The Seamstresses, undated, Galleria Pasti Bencini, Florence), a seat, partly cut off by the frame, stands prominently in the foreground while the tailors are placed at centre plan. We saw the same use of a cut-off chair that was used as *repoussoir* by Degas in his *Le foyer de la danse* (1872, Musée d'Orsay, Paris). In films, empty seats recur though not necessarily in the foreground. These cinematic chairs are not mere depth cues, however, but often perform a narrative function – to indicate that someone will soon sit down on them – within the same shot. The empty chair in the corner of the bedroom in *Ossessione* will be occupied by Giovanna after making love with Gino. Likewise the empty chair at the back of the lavatory will be occupied by the doorman in *Der letzte Mann* after his degradation.

In his article 'Divismo', (1999) Dirk Lauwaert shows the importance of the seat for the diva in the Italian silent film, in order to convey her attitude: 'Within the large set the actress needs to find a way to express her whole body by means of a convenient, unobtrusive prop. The chair is essential for this purpose. The chair helps the whole body to posture: from feet to arms, the combinations on a chair are endless. One does not even have to sit down, one can even sit in reversed direction and use the back as resistance'.³⁹⁷ Another common convention is the empty chair that refers to someone who is absent, like the unused plate at the table in Fritz Lang's *M* (1931). In *The Damned* the dining room table's empty seats around which the family gathers throughout the film are ominous references to lost family members – gone because of the actions or negligence of those who remain.

397 Dirk Lauwaert, 'Divismo', *De Witte Raaf*, 1-10-1999, <http://www.dewitteraaf.be/DWRartikels/WR81DIVA.htm>.



Fig. 88 (left). *Ossessione* (Luchino Visconti 1963). Fig. 89 (right). *Sangue blu* (Nino Oxilia 1914).

Functionality and autonomy of objects

Let's zoom out for a moment and consider how objects work as depth-related signifiers in Visconti's films. When we compare his play with foregrounded objects with that of Alfred Hitchcock, it is clear the latter used objects as *clues*, as parts of the narrative – not like *parergon* but as an integral part, a meaningful *prop*.³⁹⁸ Without the object, the scene would not function properly, such as the coffee cup scene in *Notorious*. Alicia Huberman (Ingrid Bergman) sits with her husband, the former Nazi Alex Sebastian (Claude Rains), his mother, Anna (Leopoldine Konstantin), and Dr. Otto Anderson (Reinhold Schunzel) in the living room. Alicia does not know that Sebastian and his villainous mother, who have discovered that she is spying for the Americans, are slowly poisoning her. The camera shows Alicia in the background simultaneously with the cup ominously in the foreground, like a looming monster. As the cup is out of focus, Hitchcock appears to direct the viewer's gaze toward the actors, but its disproportionate size within the frame leaves no doubt that something is wrong. While the dialogue is all about disease, the cup provides the reason for Alicia's illness. A typical example of Hitchcockian suspense: we know more than the protagonist but cannot help her. In comparison, the foregrounded bouquet during Angelica's introduction to the Salina house in *The Leopard* has both a narrative function and generates depth. Yet, here flowers only sustain the scene and do not serve as props. Visconti's films do contain props, for sure, such as Bragana's watch in *Ossessione*, but here it does not function as a depth cue or *repossoir*.³⁹⁹

398 Visconti does use props, such as the painting that functions in the deal over the apartment in *Conversation Piece*, and the Greuze in *The Leopard*, but they are not presented as *repossoir*.

399 The watch was a deliberate reference to Renoir's film *La bête humaine*, as Giuseppe De Santis has remarked. Jean A. Gili/Marco Grossi, *Alle origini del Neorealismo. Giuseppe De Santis a colloquio con Jean A. Gili* (Roma: Bulzoni, 2008), p. 41. See also note 424 for this. For iconology and visual motifs, see Erwin Panofsky, 'Introductory', *Studies in Iconology. Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (New York: Icon/Harpers & Row, 1972), pp. 3-31. Panofsky makes a distinction between the pre-iconographic formal description, iconographic analysis in the narrower sense in which motifs and clusters of motifs (compositions) are examined, and the iconographic interpretation in wider sense involving the analysis of the symbolic values of a structure.

Objects *may*, thus, enter the image purely because of their functionality but this is not exclusively the case in Visconti. As Gilles Deleuze points out: ‘In the old realism or on [sic] the model of the old action-image, objects, and settings already had a reality of their own, but it was a functional reality, strictly determined by the demands of the situation. [...] After *Obsession*, however, something appears that continues to develop in Visconti: objects and settings [*milieux*] take on an autonomous, material reality that gives them an importance in themselves. It is therefore essential that not only the viewer but the protagonists also invest the settings and the objects with their gaze, that they see and hear the things and the people, in order for action or passion to be born, erupting in a pre-existing daily life’.⁴⁰⁰ This does not begin *after Ossessione*, as Deleuze suggests, it is already prominent in that movie. Hence, at the beginning we observe Gino taking not only visual – as Deleuze claims – but also auditory possession of the trattoria and the kitchen. We similarly notice the southern Italian family at the beginning of *Rocco and His Brothers* taking in the station and the city of Milan. We may add the rosary in the first scene of *The Leopard* where excited voices disturb the prince and make him decide to end the family Mass. Deleuze notes that the situation neither has to result in an immediate action nor need be the engine behind action: ‘It is as if the action floats in the situation, rather than bringing it to a conclusion or strengthening it. This is the source of Visconti’s visionary aestheticism’.⁴⁰¹ From there, Deleuze suggests that Visconti’s *La terra trema* is more of a ‘grand vision of man and nature’, ‘of their perceptible and sensual unity, from which the “rich” are excluded and which constitutes the hope of the revolution, beyond the setbacks of the floating action: a Marxist romanticism’.⁴⁰² We can well connect Deleuze’s statement with Visconti’s great attention to objects even in his Neorealist films.

Returning to depth and *repoussoir*, however, we can identify examples of the latter, in which objects in the foreground have a narrative or metaphorical meaning. At the beginning of *Ossessione* when Gino enters Giovanna’s kitchen, a long shot shows her sitting frame right on the table while he enters from the left. A stockpot and a frying pan are placed in the left foreground, indicating Gino’s hunger. This is reminiscent of the opening images in Pudovkin’s film *Mat* (The Mother, 1926), in which we also see the mother’s pans in the foreground while she stands in the middle plane. Elsewhere in *Ossessione* we see objects with a striking *repoussoir* function, such as the petrol pumps in the opening scene that are bigger than, and frame, the men between them. The environment is made to appear at least as important as the characters. A third and most fascinating example occurs when Giovanna returns to the kitchen after the party, switches on the lights and encounters the enormous heaps of dishes, bottles, and leftovers in the fore- and middle ground while she stands at the back. Not just one meaningful object but a multitude here overwhelms both the character and the spectator. In addition to a scene in Franciolini’s *Fari nella nebbia* (see Fig. 161), made shortly before *Ossessione*, *Mat* provides a similar, though not so extreme, an example. When the drunken father enters the pub at the film’s beginning, a shot shows a large number

400 Deleuze (2005), *Cinema 2*, p. 4.

401 Ibid, p. 4.

402 Ibid, p. 5.



Fig. 90 (left). *Osessione* (Luchino Visconti 1943). Fig. 91 (right). *Mat* (Vsevolod Pudovkin 1926).

of empty bottles on the table, like a grotesque version of a Giorgio Morandi still life. The composition acts as a bad omen and suggests that the father is not going to end well.⁴⁰³

Staging in depth: people

People may also act as *repoussoirs* even when they are not the main characters in the scene. In *Death in Venice* Aschenbach arrives by gondola at the Lido. A man and a woman are standing in the right foreground, seen from the back and filmed in medium long shot. The woman is holding a parasol. Aschenbach's gondola approaches from the background. The couple clearly serve to add depth to the shot. Without them we would be looking in some amorphous and ill-defined depth of seascape. When we compare this to Impressionist beach scenes by Édouard Manet and Claude Monet, such as Manet's *Sur la plage* (1873, Musée d'Orsay, Paris) and Monet's *La plage de Trouville* (1870, National Gallery, London), the foregrounded figures are so close that they are half cut off by the frame as if in medium shot. Without them, we would see only a vista of the beach and sea, but instead, we look between the figures and beyond them to the beach, which increases the depth and the aesthetic appeal.

In painting, the *mezza figura*, seen in the background and staging depth, already appears in works by Rembrandt (*Belshazzar's Feast*, 1636-1638, National Gallery, London), Caravaggio (*Judas betrays Jesus*, c.1603, National Gallery of Art, Dublin) and even the earlier Geertgen tot Sint-Jans (*Night of Birth*, 1480-1485, National Gallery, London), where an angel is shown diagonally in the background, its wings

403 Visconti might have known *Mat* very well, as the film was widely projected in Paris when he was there in 1936, working with Jean Renoir – even if it was already 10 years old and a silent film in an era when sound had become dominant. Renoir and his circle were personally involved in the non-public showing of the film, by means of the association Ciné-Liberté, of which Renoir took part. In an interview Visconti said that the Russian films that he saw in Paris at the time impressed him more than the French ones. The Soviet productions were hard to see in Italy, because of the state's censorship and anti-communism. Visconti also mentioned the name of Pudovkin but no film titles. Giuseppe Ferrara, 'Entretien avec Luchino Visconti', *Luchino Visconti* (Paris: Editions Seghers, 1963), p. 95. Rondolino 2006/1981, p. 46.

in the dark. Rembrandt's *Blinding of Samson* (1636, Städel, Frankfurt) expertly depicts the soldier about to blind Samson standing in the dark background so that we only see his silhouette. Samson is floundering behind him but because he is in the full light, he still attracts the viewer's attention, though the soldier is the *repoussoir*.

Especially in late Renaissance and Baroque painting, many examples exist of figures who are not the main subject but are prominent in the forefront. They often lead our eyes to the central figures standing in the middle ground or even further away. In Tintoretto's *Presentation of the Blessed Virgin in the Temple* (c.1552, Madonna Dell'Orto, Venice) a woman in the foreground points a child next to her to the young Mary, who is standing on the middle plane on a set of steep stairs. The painting calls us, the spectators, to acknowledge the Holy Virgin. To her right, a woman who is not looking for Mary is sitting, apparently preoccupied with her own child. On the left an old man looks up, just like most other figures on the stairs. In *The Origins of The Perspective* (1994) Hubert Damisch notes about this painting: 'The emphasis placed on the longitudinal advance of the figures, notably the Virgin on the right, conflicts with the architectural opening perspective into depth on the left. Tintoretto, in his version of this subject in the Madonna Dell'Orto, seems to have used a more classic compositional formula; indeed the stairway seen in perspective allows him to create the impression not of a horizontal progression but of a veritable ascension, while the receding lines of the architectural elements converge upon the figure of the Virgin, in which the symbolic charge of the image is concentrated'.⁴⁰⁴ The *repoussoir* figures thus serve the perspectival effect, looking upwards from a low angle, and reinforce the symbolic focus on Mary. In Tintoretto's *Last Supper* (1592-1594, San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice), the scene is depicted from a high-angle perspective. Here again foreground figures are not protagonists – instead, they are rather the household staff – and they don't give their attention to Christ. All heads of the apostles, though, starting with the one depicted in the furthest left, look at Christ so that our gaze is directed toward him. In both paintings we see a dynamic movement: in the former a curve in the shape of an inverted C, in the latter a diagonal from lower left to upper right.

Group scenes in Visconti's films often feature the same diagonal arrangement and the same high angle of Tintoretto's *Last Supper*, for example, Don Fabrizio's luncheon in *The Leopard*, where all the village notables are democratically united at the noble family's dining table. The prince and princess sit opposite each other, exactly on the table's axial width, and are easily visible just to the left of centre, even though they are same size as those to their left and right. As the table is round and the camera is positioned from a high angle, the people on the viewer's side of the table enter the frame but are filmed from the back, making them strong *repoussoirs*. Their black outlines and the lighting on those opposite them strengthen the sense that our gaze should be directed across the foreground to the back. The light striking the white tablecloth calls attention to the table itself and everything on it, reminding us of what Deleuze writes about the objects in Visconti's films, 'an autonomous, material reality which gives them an importance in themselves'.⁴⁰⁵

404 Hubert Damisch, *The Origins of Perspective* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1994), p. 419.

405 Deleuze 2005, *Cinema 2*, p. 4.

Fig. 92. Tintoretto,
The Last Supper
(1592-1594). San
Giorgio Maggiore,
Venice.



Fig. 93. *The Leopard*
(Luchino Visconti
1963).



Similar moments recur elsewhere in *The Leopard*, when Padre Pirrone (Romolo Valli) speaks to the farmers on the way to Donnafugata, and when the Salina family arrives there and exits the carriages covered in dust. In the first example we see the priest just left of centre as in the dinner scene. His face is highlighted while farmers at the back and sides are almost black shadows. Our attention is thus drawn to the priest even though he is further away. This is similar in composition to Vincent van Gogh's *Potato Eaters* (1885, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam), where we see the back of a figure in the foreground.⁴⁰⁶ Still, the characteristic diagonal arrangement in high angle that we saw at Tintoretto and in *The Leopard* is absent here.

The composition of Padre Pirrone with the farmers is also reminiscent of the opening bar scene in Pudovkin's *Mat*, where the conspirators sit at a table and tie a drunken father to their cart. The figure seen from the back is an otherwise normal element in film, especially when people look out of windows (see Chapter 8). It often recurs in thirties cinema, and particularly Renoir, as in the shot of Rodolphe looking out the window at the ladies on the swings in *Une partie de campagne* (*A*

406 Severi 2001, p. 77.

Day in the Country, 1936, released 1946), the film for which Visconti worked as a trainee and assistant on the costumes and props.⁴⁰⁷

Distance and identification

Returning to the couple in *Death in Venice* who look out at the lagoon, it is clear that the person seen from the back conveys a special meaning. He not only serves as *repoussoir* to create depth but also works as a kind of stand-in for us, the spectators, just like the characters in Tintoretto's *Presentation of the Blessed Virgin*. In her article 'Identificazione e straniamento in *Ossessione* e *La terra trema*' (2005), Letizia Bellocchio delves into the ways that Visconti forges a bond between the viewer and the characters and yet also creates distance through classical stylistic devices related to identification, such as point-of-view shots: '*coinvolgimento e distacco*'.⁴⁰⁸ The motif of the figure seen from the back is one of these strategic devices. Bellocchio relies on Deleuze, Sandro Bernardi, and Jacques Aumont. Deleuze indicated that Neorealist films should be approached both in terms of content and with formal, aesthetic criteria. He noted that *Ossessione* can be regarded stylistically as 'a transitional film from one mode of representation to a successive one, because instead of acting the characters are in fact more concerned to take visual possession of what surrounds them. This leads to a reversal in the identification: it is no longer the spectator who identifies with the character, but rather the other way around, making the character an extension of the eye of the camera and of the viewer inside of the diegesis'.⁴⁰⁹ Thus, 'the character has become a kind of viewer. He shifts, runs, and becomes animated in vain, the situation he is in outstrips his motor capacities on all sides, and makes him see and hear what is no longer subject to the rules of response or action. He records rather than reacts'.⁴¹⁰

Ossessione, therefore, not only breaks with previous Italian cinema by showing a 'different' Italy, but is also a stylistic fracture due to its use of classic proportions of time and space where each has an effect. We can see this in scenes with '*temps morts*' that appear through long takes or *plan sequence*. Visconti also projects off-screen glances where the off-screen space might not be revealed. As Bellocchio says, 'Often he films characters from the back who are contemplating, according to the pictorial model, which materially doubles the viewer within the painting'.⁴¹¹ This is apparent in *Ossessione* and in *La terra trema*, though the latter is a completely different film. On the one hand, there is the archaic society of the Sicilian fishing community with their unintelligible dialect, filmed on location. On the other,

407 BiFi, Fonds Brunius, 774, 22 May 1936, 'Indications fournies par Visconti pour les costumes', same date 'Costumes', 27 May 1936, 'Accessoires à acheter', and 6 June 1936, 'Situation au 6 Juin'. See also Olivier Curchod, *Partie de campagne: une étude critique* (Paris: Nathan, 1995). See Chapter 8, note 450, for all additional sourcing regarding *Une partie de campagne*. NB the film's title is written both as *Une partie de campagne* and *Partie de campagne*.

408 Letizia Bellocchio, 'Identificazione e straniamento in *Ossessione* e *La terra trema*', in Letizia Bellocchio, Mauro Giori, Tomaso Subini, eds., *Guarda bene, fratello, guarda bene. Kubrick, Pasolini, Visconti* (Milan: CUEM, 2005), pp. 53-67.

409 Bellocchio 2005, p. 54.

410 Deleuze 2005, *Cinema 2*, p. 3, quoted in Bellocchio 2005, p. 55. Bellocchio quotes the Italian edition.

411 Bellocchio 2005, p. 55.



Fig. 94-95. *La terra trema* (Luchino Visconti 1948).

there is the *mise en scène* of that reality through camera angles, framing, actors' direction as well as the literary basis of the film (though a free adaptation). The opening text and the Italian voiceover summarizes how different this pre-industrial society is, and therefore blocks any identification by the viewer. In *La terra trema* the backward-facing person contemplating the landscape often recurs, interspersed with various images of people watching: the women of the Valastro family watching the male family members depart, the merchants checking the fishermen in front of the inn, the neighbours watching 'Ntoni Valastro when he return from Catania and the drunks spying on the gendarme, Don Salvatore. From the friendly image of a fisherman who, with little Alfio, inspects the Valastro's boat – and who sails off despite the rough seas – to the looming image of the villagers witnessing the return of the wrecked boat, the continuous alternation of perspectives makes it impossible to identify with the subjects of those gazes, according to Bellocchio.

She here refers to Vito Zagarrìo, who found that the frequent use of panfocal lenses in *La terra trema*, making foreground and background simultaneously sharp, flattens the image. This is why, as in *La terra trema*, Visconti foregrounds a person, an object or parts of one along the edges of the frame as if they were stage wings. This use of the 'wings', according to Zagarrìo, is not just a technical device but also an aesthetic choice: a way for viewers to frame, to watch together with the characters, while remaining external observers.⁴¹² This occurs when the Valastros must sell off their barrels of anchovies because of their financial losses. The barrels, which had earlier symbolized prosperity, are now foregrounded, while the family members are choreographed behind them like a sad echo of the family portrait that recurs in the film. Their slow movements reinforce the melancholic feeling of that

412 Vito Zagarrìo, 'Le "quinte" della storia: riflessioni sulla regia', in Lino Micciché ed., *La terra trema di Luchino Visconti. Analisi di un capolavoro* (Roma/Torino: Associazione Philip Morris Progetto Cinema/CSC/Lindau, 1993), p. 117-39; quoted in Bellocchio 2005, pp. 58-61. According to Francesco Rosi, assistant-director for *La terra trema*, a practical reason was the explanation for the use of the panfocus. One couldn't ask the non-professional actors to remain within the image during tracking shots or walk over signs on the ground. Francesco Rosi, 'L'avventura viscontiana di Acì Trezza', in: Micciché 1993, p. 21. See also Bellocchio 2005, p. 59, n. 15.

photo, which Bellocchio speaks of as ‘frozen pathos’ (for the family portrait in *La terra trema*, see also Chapter 4).⁴¹³

In *Osessione* this ‘wings’ effect might not be as strong, but the figure viewed from the back also has the same half-subjective, half-objective charge as in *La terra trema* – putting the viewer both inside and outside the diegesis. In this respect Sandro Bernardi subdivides the transition from a subjective to an objective perspective, the contrast between near and far, and the tension between the visible and the invisible. When, in *Osessione*, Giovanna sits in the café, spying on Gino, we see her from the front in close-up. She is startled but we do not see why right away. Visconti withholds this information by having the camera follow her when she gets up to leave. Only then do we see, with her, Gino and Anita cross the street to go into a milk shop (for the mobile framing in this scene, see also Chapter 9). One may add to Bernardi’s observation that this delaying of relevant information is typical in Visconti. It is already evident in the opening scene of *Osessione* when Gino remains anonymous for a long time.⁴¹⁴ In other Visconti films, we have moments of spying, such as in *La terra trema* when ‘Ntoni suspects his brother, Cola, of leaving the island and abandoning the family. Here the camera constantly films over ‘Ntoni’s shoulder, making us voyeurs. When, shortly afterwards, bankers inspect the house in order to confiscate it, they are first observed by a neighbour and then by the residents.

In *Senso*, Livia returns home soaking wet and distraught, having just heard that her lover has been transferred. Her maid tells her that an unknown man is waiting for her in the city. Livia thinks – like us – that it is her lover. Her husband, Count Serpieri (Heinz Moog), suspects the same and chases her. We look over his shoulder continually at her on the street, in the narrow stairwell, and as the revealing door opens. The stranger, however, turns out to be Livia’s cousin who is in the resistance, and it is at this point that the story takes a twist. *White Nights* also doubles the spying of its characters. Young Mario (Marcello Mastroianni) watches a blonde stranger, Natalia (Maria Schell), who waits for her lover on a bridge – again a character ‘discovery’ in Visconti – but he is himself closely observed by a dark-haired prostitute (Clara Calamai). In the final scene, we see Natalia stand between the two men, not knowing whom to choose. First, we see a shot in which Mario is still in the foreground and Natalia runs away from him towards the other man. She runs back to him to say goodbye. In the next shot we see the lover foregrounded and Mario in the background. Natalia embraces the man and they walk away together offscreen and thus out of the story. Mario is literally and visually pushed into the background.

As we saw in *Osessione*, the shot of the person looking offscreen is sometimes followed by a semi-subjective shot. Gino and his companion, the Spaniard, sit on a wall in Ancona, looking out over the sea. We first see them arrive from the side of

413 Bellocchio 2005, p. 60.

414 As mentioned, the postponed introduction of the character is strongly reminiscent of the delayed introduction of the antagonist, Scarpia, in *Tosca* (1941) by Carl Koch and Jean Renoir. Visconti was assistant-director of this film and learned his trade here, after his experience with *Une partie de campagne*. A stylistic comparison of this film with Visconti’s early work has always been unjustly neglected because Renoir and Visconti always dismissed the film, as did their subsequent critics. See Blom (2011), pp. 80-92.



Fig. 96-99. *Ossessione* (Luchino Visconti 1943).

the frame while a musician plays in front of them. They walk to the background. At the top of the frame the sea is already visible. Then we see them sitting, facing the sea, from the front while one gives the other a light. In the background we see a foreman walking on the cathedral's roof giving directions to builders. Instead of returning to the front view of the two men, Visconti shoots them from the back watching the sea, while people walk by in the foreground. The sea, moreover, embodies Gino's hopes of breaking away from his morbid love for Giovanna. The frame that encompasses Gino's world holds him captive and leads him slowly towards his fate. We see a similar perspectival confusion later when the Spaniard shows up at the trattoria party. Gino and he sit along the waterfront. The Spaniard tries to persuade him to leave and travel through Italy. He looks forward, imagining the future, while Gino bends his head. While we would expect the next shot to show the Spaniard's POV, Visconti does not cut to this. This last moment of male bonding over, Gino walks away. Only then do we see a shot of the landscape that the Spaniard sees: the broad river and its shores as part of a larger panorama that is framed by the dyke and the road. In short, Visconti distances us from Gino's dream. Shortly afterwards the two men have their final quarrel and the Spaniard leaves Gino, to betray him to the police.



Fig. 100-102. *Osessione* (Luchino Visconti 1943).

Far away, so close, and the gaze into the camera

When considering staging in depth and the use of people as depth cues, we must take both static and dynamic situations into account. As Bellocchio states, the actor may walk to the back or front, the camera can move to the front or back and, during editing, shots of nearby people can alternate with shots showing them from near and far.⁴¹⁵ This reaffirms Visconti's desire to both engage viewers and keep them a distance to prevent total identification with the characters. Bellocchio mentions the – indeed beautiful – example of *Osessione's* swamp sequence, when Gino and Giovanna have reconciled after he has learned that he has become a father. First we see them from a distance in the riverbanks and the dunes' immeasurable vastness; the people seem to have merged with the natural surroundings. Gino lifts Giovanna over puddles towards the camera. They move away from the camera, lie down in the sand, after which Visconti cuts to a close shot. As they kiss, the camera pans to the right to show the vast landscape. This place, initially presented as so bleak, now seems to have something idyllic, as if the impending 'doom' of the film's tone is not because of the location but of something else. Thus, Visconti presents us with a small symphony of distance and proximity. The two wake up

415 Bellocchio 2005, p. 63.

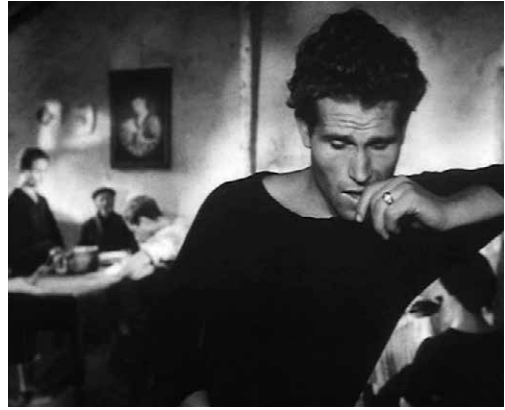


Fig. 103-104. *La terra trema* (Luchino Visconti 1948).

(close-up), however, realising that the police are on their heels and go back to the house to pack (distance shot). As they drive off, the car is filmed in close-up and the camera stays with it until it is far away on the dyke. It is a symbolic moment: Giovanna, who never wanted to leave, is now willing and takes the decisive step. Besides dynamism generated through editing and camera movement, the shifting *mise en scène* from the front to the rear evokes such contrasts (see Chapter 8).

Following Bellocchio's article, we need to draw attention to the tension between the visible and the *invisible*, especially with gazes that are directed offscreen but where the observed object is subsequently not shown. These kinds of glances may be significantly disruptive, Bellocchio says, especially when they are facing the camera.⁴¹⁶ They assume the characters' desires and force the viewer to reflect on their emotional states. Here again we are dealing with the ambiguity so typical of Visconti. The look towards the camera reveals something about the character but also creates a direct relationship with the audience: *we* are being watched too. Bellocchio states that this occurs mainly in *La terra trema*, less so in *Ossessione*. In the latter film, she only mentions the moment when Giovanna looks into the camera to urge Gino to murder her husband. The phenomenon has a special charge in *La terra trema* as it mainly occurs when Visconti focuses on the consciousness of the people or generational confrontation. The characters are thus not only talking to others in the picture but also to *us*. We might add that this look is often done into the camera by a human *repoussoir* standing in front of the image. This living conscience is often combined with one or more people who stand in the background and listen or reply to him or her. Unlike analytical editing, in which a film cuts from person A to person B, we see both characters simultaneously. Again, deep staging here acts as an alternative to editing.

Sometimes characters do not even have to talk to indicate that their minds are elsewhere, in another place, another time, in the past or the future. In *Ossessione's* closing shot, Gino is filmed in medium close-up, looking offscreen right. Giovanna has been accidentally killed along with her unborn child, Gino has just been arrested and his future is over. Whereas in the James M. Cain novel, the film's source, and

416 Bellocchio 2005, pp. 65-7.

Chenal's earlier film adaptation, *Le dernier tournant*, the story continues with the protagonist in prison awaiting his execution, Gino's look offscreen expresses and synthesizes that part of the story. Visconti would later repeat this in *The Leopard* where Don Fabrizio's look in a mirror and subsequent shedding of a tear signals his future: age, decay and death. Lampedusa's novel offered a future for Don Fabrizio though Visconti omitted it. These confessions, statements, dreams and visions are not only encompassed by the look into the camera, but also when characters look into mirrors. As we will see in Chapter 10, such moments recur in *Ossessione*, *La terra trema* and in Visconti's later films. The future of his characters is projected beyond the mirror, offscreen, and also *hors texte*.

Framing: Doors, Windows, and Anti-Framing

In the chapter 'Le bord et la distance' in his *L'Oeil interminable* (2007), Jacques Aumont relates the use of doors, windows, and mirrors in film and painting to *centralisation*, rather than depth, in the image; he calls this *surcadrage*, the emphatic designing of the centre by the frame within the frame.⁴¹⁷ Classical cinema makes use of centralisation by placing persons or objects in centre frame and may even – fleetingly – adopt the *symmetry* used in figurative painting, though at the risk of becoming too archaic or too modern. In addition, the camera can pan (*reframe*) to hold the actors in centre-frame as they move; it keeps the centre over time. The doubling of the film frame through door and window openings and mirrors emphasizes this centrality and adds a *mise en abîme*. The representation through the opening is thus a picture within another picture. Often a character is displayed as an intermediary, and his or her glance through the window also indirectly becomes the eye of the viewer. Aumont later relates the window (and its variants) to staging in depth, because the doubling of the frame points precisely to the paradox of fictitious depth, despite the reality of the flat surface.

Aumont warns, though, that such centralisation does not always occur in film; there may also be *décadrage*, a term coined by Pascal Bonitzer. For Bonitzer, *décadrage* creates a void in the centre of the image, emphasising the frame as its edge that can be restored through sequentiality and which often occurs in cinema. It is the obverse of centrality: while the one fills the centre, the other empties it; where the one diminishes the edges, the other emphasizes them; and where the one is static, the other dynamic.⁴¹⁸ Within Visconti's shots with *repoussoirs*, the *décadrage* at the centre is not entirely clear: with the *repoussoir* in the foreground or with the character or object on the middle- or background. This is especially true for his widescreen films and with deep focus. In shots of door and window openings, however, we encounter centralized images, but even here Visconti also used decentralized ones to increase deep staging.⁴¹⁹ The accent is placed on left- or right-of-centre. Nevertheless, in contrast to the spaghetti westerns of Sergio Leone, for example, a void in the centre occurs, at most, only at certain points during mobile framing.

417 Aumont 2007, pp. 140-2. As with Stoichita, windows and mirrors fall in the same category for Aumont.

418 Aumont 2007, pp. 144-5. Aumont refers to Pascal Bonitzer, *Peinture et cinéma. Décadrages* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma/Éditions de l'Étoile, 1987).

419 These centralized shots through windows one encounters rather more often with Renoir than with Visconti.

Door openings and vistas: Painting and cinema

In Visconti's films the doorway acts as a kind of frame within a frame. This leads back to Stoichita, who makes an interesting distinction between door and window openings in figurative painting.⁴²⁰ The window opens the interior to the exterior; it lets in light and offers a view outward. This is also how windows are represented. Fewer examples occur of looking from outside towards the inside – doors do not possess that specific visual function. You can pass through a doorway going in or out. Still, doors can also act as windows, à la Alberti (see below), when they provide a glimpse of an interior space (see also Chapter 7). Not only can they offer a look from outside to inside or vice versa, but they also offer a view on a second adjacent interior space. The open door thus connects two adjacent spaces. Where the window looks out from the interior (from culture) to the exterior (nature), doors allow us to remain within the world of culture, of the domestic environment. Stoichita considers the doorway, therefore, to be the matrix of interior or genre painting. Of course, his words should be qualified for films: sometimes open

doors may provide glances of gardens or streets while in other scenes the camera shows people climbing through windows towards the inside or outside. As will be shown, views from the outside towards the inside regularly recur in cinema, especially when people stand in front of windows.

The doubling of the frame through the doorway is already visible in medieval painting. In fifteenth-century Flemish painting, this motif was frequently employed, especially in the work of Rogier van der Weijden. He worked with decorated arches, reminiscent of church interiors, that functioned as doorways and that revealed interior spaces. These frames work as a kind of doubling of the painting's frame. The pure interior painting – the interior not in the service of a religious scene – is from a relatively later date. While it did not develop into a metapictorial motif in Flemish Primitive painting, it did so by the seventeenth century when the doorway became a *topos*. In the latter 1600s, the open door appears as an important motif in Dutch painting because of its simultaneous separation *and* connection of two indoor spaces within the image. One of the oldest examples is Nicolaes Maes's *The Idle Servant* (1655, National Gallery, London). The difference between it and Pieter Aertsen's *Christ with Mary and Martha* (see Chapter 7) is that in the former the interior space is not religious but a second genre – the interior scene. Starting with the Maes painting's frame and foregrounded scene, the viewer looks through the doorway to the second, interior space; thus, two parallel frames are in contact with each other (unlike in Velázquez's *Mary and Martha*). In the latter 1600s, the view through the open door, the vista, becomes a constant motif in the work of Maes, Pieter de Hooch, and Emanuel de Witte, all of whom Stoichita refers to as *petits maîtres*.

420 Stoichita 2015 on door openings: pp. 80-9, and on window openings, pp. 69-80. In 2006, Anne Friedberg published an interesting study on the virtual window, although representation of the window in art or cinema was not really part of her study. Anne Friedberg, *The Virtual Window. From Alberti to Microsoft* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2006).



Fig. 105 (top, left).
Nicolaes Maes, *The Idle Servant* (1655). National Gallery, London.



Fig. 106 (top, right).
Samuel van Hoogstraten, *Les Pantoufles* (1658). Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Fig. 107 (right). Johannes Vermeer, *The Love Letter* (c.1669-1670), Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



Samuel van Hoogstraten even goes deeper into the representation of the doorway. In his paintings, *Les Pantoufles* a.k.a. *View of an Interior, or The Slippers* (1658, Musée du Louvre, Paris, previously attributed to Pieter de Hooch) and *View of a Corridor* (1662, Dyrham Park, Gloucestershire) he depicts two scenes in which people are practically absent. At most, the painter refers their presence, such as the woman in the background and the broom and the slippers in *The Slippers*, and the dog and the cat in the middle and the mop in the foreground of *View of a Corridor*. In the middle ground of the latter a man's head is visible from the back and a woman's from the front, viewed through a glass pane with a raster. While the man's face can vaguely be discerned in a mirror, both faces are unrecognisable. Basically, we see pure interior as an infinite chain of doorposts, a stylistic tendency that produces a set of parallel investigations by Hoogstraten that would lead to his famous three-dimensional dioramas of Dutch interiors that were viewed through peepholes at the ends of a box. Here too we see the sheer fascination of interiors – only one man happens to be present in the background. Moreover, Hoogstraten's *Slippers* contains an additional doorframe on the right. The picture frame appears to be a doorway itself. Stoichita notes, however, that because of their small dimensions, we cannot consider these kinds of paintings as literal works of *trompe l'oeil*. At most, we can see them as gaps in the wall (*embrasures*) through which we see a different reality.

Stoichita discusses Vermeer's *Love Letter* (c.1669-70, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam) and *An Interior, with a Woman Refusing a Glass of Wine* possibly by Ludolf de Jongh (c.1650-1665, National Gallery, London). The latter would have been a source of inspiration for Vermeer, De Hooch, and Hoogstraten, says Roland Fleischer, professor emeritus at Pennsylvania State University.⁴²¹ De Jongh himself was a Rotterdam painter who was a generation older than the aforementioned Delft painters. Stoichita writes that the use of space in *The Love Letter* is reminiscent of Hoogstraten. In Vermeer, the foreground is a *hors-porte*, a space beyond or outside of the door whose objects in the front-right create a sort of still life. The doorway, the foregrounded objects, the overhanging curtain, and the dim light work as *repoussoirs* to the underlying interior. Some pictures in the painting's foreground are just barely legible. Our focus is instead steered towards the two women and the checkered tile floor in the middle ground, while landscapes and seascapes are featured on the white wall in the background. Still life, interior scene and landscape are combined as the three modalities of the image in which depth is created. Stoichita notes that in De Jongh's work we just can see the edge and the handle of a door at left, making the whole painting essentially a vista. A few years before Vermeer's famous interior pieces, the fascination for framing was already evident. The background enables us to see both the person in front as well as the off-screen space beyond the open door. The person, Stoichita claims, acts as our

421 While in the 1997 edition Stoichita indicated him as an anonymous Delft painter, possibly De Hooch, Hoogstraten or Hendrick ter Burgh, he remarks the identification of Ludolf de Jongh in his 2015 edition. Stoichita 2015, pp. 87-88. Roland E. Fleischer identified the painting as by De Jongh in his article 'Ludolf de Jongh's The Refused Glass and and its Effect on the Art of Vermeer and De Hooch', in Roland E. Fleischer, Susan Clare Scott eds., *Rembrandt, Rubens and the Art of Their Time: Recent Perspectives. Papers from the Pennsylvania State University IX* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), pp. 250-66. The National Gallery takes up this attribution as 'possibly by'.

‘ambassador’ – he stands in relation to the mirror as we stand before the painting – but also as the mediator between the painting and us.⁴²² In the final chapter, we will see how Visconti also shows the off-screen space behind the camera through the use of mirrors.

Ben Brewster states that, as opposed to American cinema, early twentieth century European cinema cut from one space to another less quickly, as when an actor walked from one room to another.⁴²³ Sets were built with a large door in the background through which one could see a second room. Action in the rear then could be shown through the doorway although this did not often contribute to the central narrative. In *Film Style & Technology* (1992), Barry Salt indicates this likely originated in the theatre. Its first cinematic representation was in *L’Assassinat du Duc de Guise* (Le Bargy and Calmettes, 1908), but soon spread to other French productions as well as those in other European countries such as Denmark, Sweden, and Italy, such as in August Blom’s *Ekspeditricen* (1911) and Gance’s *Mater Dolorosa* (1918). It was also present in early American films, such as Vitagraph productions, where the foregrounded character drama was often supported by the sight of social gatherings in the background. Salt concludes, ‘from a general point of view one could consider the European use of space behind to be an attempt to get more variation in the image during the course of the shot (and of the film) to make up for that variety that was otherwise provided in American films by the greater use of cutting’.⁴²⁴ In short, the vista was the alternative for editing. Visconti is an heir to that tradition.

Visconti’s vistas

Visconti films characters through doorways in ways reminiscent of such Dutch seventeenth-century painters as Vermeer and De Hooch, but also of deep staging in European silent film, where the action takes place both at the front and in the rear. When, in *La terra trema*, the male fishermen come home, wash, and change their clothes, we see them through an open door both in the room where the camera is positioned and in a background room. The rooms are directly connected to each other, giving us a greater sense of three-dimensionality. In *Bellissima*, Maddalena visits a studio photographer with her daughter where she meets another client: a genteel lady whose posh daughter dons a tutu. We see both women through bay doors while the foreground remains dark and the people in the adjacent room stand centred in the middle ground in the light, drawing the viewer’s attention to them, similar to Vermeer’s *Love Letter*. The same setup happens later when the photographer takes leave of Maddalena. A third example occurs when Maddalena, a nurse, injects a patient. We see her prepare the syringe in a backroom while the foreground is kept dark.

Doorways always function as frames within the cinematic frame. Sometimes they function as blockages that partially obstruct the spectator’s view. Despite the horizontal film frame, they reveal a vertical image of the area behind the door.

422 Stoichita 2015, p. 87.

423 Brewster 1992, pp. 45-55. Salt 1992, also refers to this on pp. 102-4.

424 Salt 1992, p. 104.



Fig. 108 (left). *La terra trema* (Luchino Visconti 1948). Fig. 109 (right). *Bellissima* (Luchino Visconti 1951).



Fig. 110-111. *White Nights* (Luchino Visconti 1957).



Fig. 112 (left). *Rocco and His Brothers* (Luchino Visconti 1960). Fig. 113 (right). *Il lavoro* (Luchino Visconti 1962).

In *White Nights*, Mario and Natalia have just finished dancing in a café. We see them through the open glass door, standing in a smoky room. The image is shot in the standard Academy aspect ratio (1.37:1). The horizontal format, however, contrasts with the vertical lines of the doorframes. The vista onto the ballroom has therefore been rendered vertically. Afterwards, the glass door closes and we see Natalia through a half-fogged up window pane, totally elated. We barely see the rest of the café because the condensation on the glass leaves open space only around her. The other customers are separated from Natalia and Mario by a vertical arrow in the middle of the window: Natalia and Mario are right, the others left. Looking beyond the condensation we can see that Natalia's elation contrasts with the boredom of two ladies sitting on a bench in the background.

In *Rocco and His Brothers*, Rocco (Alain Delon) and his brother, Ciro (Max Cartier), make restitution for a theft committed by their brother Simone (Renato Salvatori) in the house of wealthy boxing manager Morini (Roger Hanin). We see the manager in his art and antique-laden house through the same semi-transparent doors (see Chapter 7). While Rocco deals with Morini, Ciro looks at the artifacts through the half-open door. When Ciro tries to talk Rocco out of signing a long-term boxing contract with Morini, we see them in the background space behind the open door, a shot similar to the vistas in Dutch painting, while Morini observes the two others through the glass doors in the left foreground. He acts both as human *repoussoir* and as an interested party: if Ciro manages to convince Rocco, Morini loses his prizefighter *and* his money. The art works indicate the situation's harshness: the poor young boxer sells his body and his soul to the rich man. Again, the vertical lines of the doorway contrast with the horizontal image, but here also with the doors' horizontal bars.

When, in *Il lavoro*, Pupe (Romy Schneider) answers her father over the phone while in the bathroom, her husband secretly overhears in the adjacent room. Through a doorway we, like he, can look into the bathroom. Our eye is drawn to the lush interior but we also see the reflection of the naked Pupe in a mirror. Her husband (Tomas Milian) secretly spies upon her, just like we do, because he has created a scandal with his rich wife and father-in-law, his dependence on their money but also because of her physical beauty. Open doors, then, suggest voyeurism because we see something otherwise impermissible. The indirect gaze may even increase this (see chapter 10 for more on Visconti's use of mirrors to convey the indirect gaze).

In Visconti's widescreen films such as *The Leopard* and *L'innocente*, the contrast of horizontal and vertical is even more striking than those shot in Academy format.⁴²⁵ In *L'innocente* a valet enters Tullio and Teresa's hotel suite with an enormous bouquet of roses. We see him in the sitting room through the bedroom's open doors while the camera is positioned in the bedroom. The shot is Tullio's POV. In the reverse shot from the other room, Visconti shoots along the door

425 In his series *A Personal Journey with Martin Scorsese Through American Movies* (1995), Scorsese shows how directors such as Elia Kazan quickly knew how to play with the new widescreen format by contrasting it with vertical elements in the *mise en scène*. He explains this with a scene in the mother's bordello in *East of Eden* (1955) in which doorposts and positioning of actors express the narrowed space and the stifling situation through their verticality.



Fig. 114 (right, top). *L'innocente* (Luchino Visconti 1976).



Fig. 115 (right, middle). *The Leopard* (Luchino Visconti 1963).



Fig. 116 (right, bottom). *The Leopard* (Luchino Visconti 1963).

Fig. 117 (below, left). *The Damned* (Luchino Visconti 1969).

Fig. 118 (below, right). *Adolf von Menzel, Wohnzimmer mit Menzels Schwester* (1847) Neue Pinakothek, Munich.



posts and curtains towards the bedroom where we notice Tullio indirectly via a mirror against the back wall. As many of his films attest, he was fond of this kind of indirect response (on mirrors, see Chapter 10).

In widescreen films such as *The Leopard*, we often do not see the tops of the doors, so that we are confronted with vertical dimensions that contrast with the horizontal picture frame. The open doors offer views of background spaces and invite the viewer to investigate all planes within the film frame. Often, our gaze is explicitly sent to the rear when an actor goes to the next room, such as Tancredi looking for his uncle during *The Leopard's* climatic ball sequences, or because the foreground is quiet and contains few or no actors, such as when Don Fabrizio, standing in back of the hall, is about to leave.

Sometimes doorways are shot from a relatively high position, enabling an even deeper look into the underlying space. In *The Leopard's* opening scene, we look over the staff's heads into the background space, to the performance of a domestic mass. When Don Fabrizio decides to go to the city, we see him standing in the background, surrounded by his family, while in the foreground, we look back over the heads of the family priest, Don Fabrizio's wife and one of their daughters (for group situations filmed from a high angle, see also Chapter 7).

In *The Damned*, Herbert Thalmann exits the dining room, revolted by the Essenbeck family. Behind him we observe the table with the remaining relatives. In *La terra trema*, we look over Mara's shoulder (Nelluccia Gemmona) and see the bailiffs arrive at her doorstep. In all these cases, there are practical reasons for high-angle vistas. If the camera had not been positioned in this way, the actors would have blocked our view on the adjacent spaces and the people in the background. In addition, the high angle allows us to construct a relationship between the people in the foreground and those in the background. Finally the high angle has a practical functionality: you obviate the need for a ceiling where many film lights are usually hidden. These high angles are reminiscent of classical paintings where door or window openings are not visualized. In Vermeer and De Hooch, we usually look eye-level (*straight-on*, in film terms) at individuals in the background. In one later, nineteenth-century pictorial version, Adolf von Menzel's *Wohnzimmer mit Menzels Schwester* (Living Room with the Artist's Sister, 1847, Neue Pinakothek, Munich), we seem to be at eye-level watching the girl, though our viewing point is quite low as we see part of the ceiling behind her. Again, the door styles seem to echo the frame and emphasize the vertical line.

Vistas in the cinema of the 1920s and 1930s

Visconti's use of doors is clearly embedded not only in pictorial but also in cinematic tradition.

Doors that block or filter the spectator's view of characters were already present in twenties cinema, especially in Murnau. As discussed in Chapter 7, *Der letzte Mann* makes heavy use of *repoussoirs* by arrows of doors and windows. Murnau also played with open and closed doors. The frosted glass doors in the hotel toilets partially block our view of the characters. The night after his daughter's wedding, the ex-doorman arrives late and sneaks into the underground washrooms where



Fig. 119 (left). *Der letzte Mann* (F.W. Murnau 1924). Fig. 120 (right). *Les bas-fonds* (Jean Renoir 1936).



Fig. 121 (left). *Ossessione* (Luchino Visconti 1943). Fig. 122 (right). *La bête humaine* (Jean Renoir 1938).

he works after having been demoted to washroom attendant. He sticks his head through the door to see that there are no others present. His head is consequently framed between the arrows and the door's glass surfaces. Later an arrogant customer brusquely exits the washroom, leaving behind the devastated attendant, while the doors swing up and down. Filmed from the outside, we see the old man while the swinging doors vertically constrict and frame the image. The scene perfectly symbolizes his experience of the washroom as a kind of subterranean prison.

The staging of depth through open doors and hallways proliferated in thirties cinema in Josef von Sternberg and Jean Renoir. At the end of von Sternberg's *Blonde Venus*, Helen comes home worried. She looks through the doors at her sick son and decides to take care of him. The vertically decorated hem of her elegant robe complements the vertical line of the doorway. Shortly after, she is framed in the doorway holding medicine while a vertical line behind her echoes those of the doorposts (see also Chapter 7 for use of bars as repoussoirs in *Blonde Venus*). In Renoir's *Les bas-fonds*, Natacha returns to her stepfather Kostylev (Vladimir Sokoloff) and his daughter Vasilissa (Suzy Prim), the old man having angrily rejected her for refusing his selection of an ugly fiancé. We look inside his room

from the outside, similar to De Jongh and Vermeer's vistas. On both sides, the open door and wall outside of the room block our sight. We see Natacha in the left front, covered by the door and the wall to her left. In the middle ground Kostylev comes forward. Then Vasilissa appears and angrily walks towards Natacha. Both throw themselves on her but do so off-screen right.

In *La bête humaine*, Renoir again used vistas in doorways: in the scenes when Jacques Lantier (Jean Gabin) looks up his mistress, Séverine Roubaud (Simone Simon), when he kills her and when her husband Roubaud (Fernand Ledoux) finds her corpse in an almost identical setup and framing. This latter scene looks very similar to the one in *Osessione* when Gino meets Giovanna for the first time in the kitchen. Like Renoir, Visconti blocks his figures in the underlying space with people in the foreground. When we first see Giovanna, her legs dangle from the kitchen table on Gino's left. The rest of her body is concealed by his figure in the doorway that we see from the back. While the film is in Academy format, the vertical lines of the doorpost, the door, the Gino's figure, the table legs, and the background window dominate. Visconti used the same setup and almost the same *mise en scène* later when Bragana has left home and Gino decides to take Giovanna, now in a full figure shot, waiting for him in the kitchen.

La bête humaine's final shot of the murdered Séverine shows just *her* legs, again to her husband's left. We see them on the left side of the bed. The high back of the headboard and Roubaud, her husband, conceal her corpse in the same way that Visconti uses blockages in *Osessione* to prevent our seeing Giovanna.⁴²⁶ In both *La bête humaine* and *Osessione* we look through a doorway that parallels the film frame. In both, a man in the doorway partially blocks the view of the background space that serves to intrigue the viewer. Again, the vertical lines dominate over the horizontal frame. Earlier in *La bête humaine*, Jacques stabs Séverine on the bed from the same angle and the same framing but the bed's tall headboard and the narrow doorway obstruct our view of the murder.

Visconti's doors. From inside to outside and from outside to inside

While Visconti regularly uses doors as vistas, he also uses them to show the interaction between inside and outside, especially in his early films. When Gino first enters the trattoria in *Osessione*, the wooden doors are open and a curtain that screens the sun flies up. A sign on the right door says, 'Itala Pilsner', referring to the pub's function. Gino gropes in his pockets and finds some money to buy food. Later when the innkeeper has gone and his wife tempts Gino by singing her song like a modern siren, Gino decides to have sex with her. He pulls the doors closed

426 While the scene in *Osessione* was shot with a fixed camera, in Renoir's film the camera tracks forward focusing more and more on the pocket watch that Roubaud stole from Séverine's godfather, the judge Grandmorin, whom he killed. The watch symbolizes Roubaud's greed, both in Renoir's film and in Zola's novel. As mentioned in Chapter 7, for *Osessione* Visconti adopted this watch motif, symbolising Giovanna's materialism, while in James M. Cain's novel *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, ...



Fig. 123. *Osessione* (Luchino Visconti 1943). Fig. 124. *La terra trema* (Luchino Visconti 1948).

and, using an empty plate as an alibi, walks into the kitchen to sate another kind of hunger. Gino's closing the doors makes clear that he does not want any prying eyes while he becomes Giovanna's vigorous lover.

At the beginning of *La terra trema*, Visconti introduces the members of the Valastro family and their house. The camera, first positioned at a high angle, tilts down along the top of a gate where we see Mara exiting, carrying an oil lamp to see if her brothers are back from fishing. On the door, signs hang in memory of their deceased father. While a voiceover explains that we are at the fisherman's family house, we watch Mara return inside through the open door into the courtyard. When she opens a window, we get an overview of the living room. In short, it looks as though all the doors and windows have been opened mainly to enable us to orient ourselves to the house and to get to know the main characters. The decor assists this sense of discovery. Many of Visconti's films, as we have seen, offer such an exploration of the microcosmos in which the story takes place. We open doors, explore rooms, roam spaces – whether it is Gino going into the kitchen in *Osessione*, Angelica wandering the old, uninhabited attics of the Salina house with Tancredi in *The Leopard* or the young count looking for his wife in *Il lavoro*. Doors that open are not only openings and thresholds to narratives and characters, but are also entrances to tactile, tangible worlds that evoke atmosphere and emotion. What we encounter along the road is just as important as our ultimate goal, confirming Derrida's ideas about the importance of the trajectory (see Introduction and Chapter 1).

Through doorways, we can look inside. In *La terra trema* when the daughter, Lucia, is courted by the local *maresciallo*, we see her in the courtyard blissfully peeling potatoes while we watch her mother cooking inside through an open door. But open doors can also provide a view towards the outside. In *Rocco and His Brothers* we

...the basis for *Osessione*, it hardly plays a role. Giuseppe De Santis, Visconti's assistant during the shooting of *Osessione*, complained about this: '...there are some failures, the echoes of Renoir that are a bit annoying... like for example the watch from *La bête humaine* that returned all the time... and which I never understood. Often I wondered for what reasons he deliberately planted certain things in this film ...' Jean A. Gili/Marco Grossi, *Alle origini del Neorealismo. Giuseppe De Santis a colloquio con Jean A. Gili* (Roma: Bulzoni, 2008), p. 41.

frequently look outside into the courtyard through the balcony doors to the family's residential barracks, underscoring their connection to the larger community.

Visconti regularly suggests the close linkages between foreground and background by showing actions through door and window openings, such as in *The Leopard* when the carriages are filmed through the open church doors, driving away after the family has entered for Mass. Visconti strengthened this bond between inside and outside even more than Renoir through the use of billowing curtains, as we have seen.⁴²⁷ *The Leopard's* opening scene is a striking example of this: the camera slips inside through a balcony door and swaying curtains, passing from an outside view to one from inside while the exterior is still remembered (see previous Chapter).⁴²⁸ Visconti suggests that off-screen space persists; that the world does not stop with the three or four walls of the film set. Visconti emphasizes the unity of space as well as the dynamism of his camera. While his actors may be silent and motionless, and the objects naturally remain immobile, there is always movement within the image because of the wind and the curtains, the light or the camera (see Chapter 9 for a discussion of the mobile framing in this scene).

The frame within the frame: window openings

Concerning window openings, Stoichita argues that the distinction between window and painting had already become small with Velázquez. The metaphorical window is so ambiguous that any classification might be precarious.⁴²⁹ He therefore focuses on only one question: what role does the painted window play in the early modern awareness of painting itself? (see Chapter 7) Just as the door seems to be a synecdoche and a metaphor for early modern interior painting and the niche a definition of the still life, the window is often a feature in a different genre – the landscape. The window updates the dialectic between inside and outside without which the landscape could not be observed. Thus, landscape painting arises from a contradiction: while still life requires that you stand close, landscapes need *distance*. Open-air painting is a relatively modern invention, a reaction to landscapes that until then were painted in studios. The image of nature was thus resituated to a space of culture and civilisation from which one gazed at the 'outside'. It is the rectangle of the window that changed the 'outside' into a 'landscape', Stoichita avers.⁴³⁰ Hence we need to consider the backgrounds in early modern Flemish and Italian painting to observe nature through windows. In Jan van Eyck's *Ghent Altarpiece* or *Lamb of God* 1430-1432), for example, we can see both motives of the window framing the

427 This is a 'trope' one encounters in D'Annunzio, who writes in *L'innocente*: 'A light breeze came in from time to time, and the curtains swelled; every breath carried into the room as far as us the voluptuousness of that summer night'. D'Annunzio (2009), p. 154. Earlier on, when Tullio realizes his wife is pregnant from another, he looks at the alcove where his wife sleeps: 'It seemed to me that the curtains were waving; but I was mistaken. And yet, through the curtains, something like a magnetic shadow came and penetrated me, something against which I was without resistance. I reentered the alcove with a shudder'. *Ibid.*, p. 104. See also Chapter 6.

428 While Visconti still uses cuts between inside and outside, Michelangelo Antonioni, in one famous scene in *Professione reporter* (*The Passenger*, 1975) has the camera move slowly from outside to inside, passing a grate, without a single cut.

429 Stoichita 2015, p. 69-71.

430 *Ibid.*, p. 71.



Fig. 125 (left). Jan van Eyck, *La Vierge du chancelier Rolin* (1435). Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Fig. 126 (right). Johannes Vermeer, *View of Delft* (1660-1661). Mauritshuis, The Hague.

landscape and the niche framing the still life, on the outer hatches of the painting. Stoichita cites Aretino's famous letter to Titian, dated 1544, where he lyrically describes his views of Venice and the Venetian air. Aretino interpreted the Venetian lagoon as a painting.⁴³¹ For sixteenth-century Venetians, painting was second nature because by imitating it, they emulated – and surpassed – it. Conversely nature imitates painting in return; the window frame helps the viewer to experience the landscape as painting. If paintings had not already acted as frames of reference, Aretino could not have made this connection, Stoichita notes.⁴³²

One such example is *La Vierge du chancelier Rolin* (The Madonna of Chancellor Rolin) by Jan van Eyck (1435, Musée du Louvre, Paris). In the background we see two people viewing a landscape with their backs to us. They are stand-ins for us spectators: we look at the performance in the foreground, though the two background figures direct us to the scenery, similar to *Ossessione's* shot of the two men looking at the sea at Ancona (see Chapter 7). Such duplication was apparently common because backward-facing figures contemplating the landscape are also present in Rogier van der Weyden, *Saint Luke Drawing the Virgin* (1435-1440, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston). It was not until the sixteenth century, however, that the theme of seeing through windows created the new genre of landscape painting; and it was only in the seventeenth century that the independent landscape started to play with the painting's frame as though it were a window frame. One of the most famous Dutch landscape paintings, Vermeer's *View of Delft* (1660-1661, Mauritshuis, The Hague), was painted from his window. Stoichita states that contemporaries started to conceive of the painted landscape as a self-sustaining entity.⁴³³ What had previously only been a *parergon*, a fragment of history or religious painting, filling in the empty spaces, had now become a whole, *ergon*,

431 Ibid., pp. 73-75.

432 Ibid., p. 75.

433 Ibid., p. 76-79.

independent. This transition happened through the use of the window. Sometimes the lack of a visible window frame prevents one from explicitly tracing a window in landscape paintings, as in Vermeer's *View of Delft*, so hanging the painting might result in creating a kind of *embrasure*. We might also project the idea of embrasure on the phenomenon of the cinema screen as a window without a clear frame.

Stoichita suggests that the window is used mainly to show the view from inside, looking out. As we've previously said, paintings often depict a backward-facing person looking outside. This is true both in Stoichita's early modern examples and in many Romantic paintings and drawings such as Wilhelm Tischbein, *Goethe in Rom zum Fenster hinauslehnend* (1787, Freies Deutsches Hochstift, Frankfurt), or Caspar David Friedrich, *Frau am Fenster* (1822, Nationalgalerie, Berlin). In seventeenth-century painting, there are certainly examples of looking in from the outside, or where the viewer looks outside but figures lurk just inside the interior space. The latter occurs in Hendrick van der Burgh's *Woman with Child at a Window* (c.1660, Prinsenhof, Delft). Although Vermeer often depicted windows, including open windows, these were presented laterally so that we have no idea of what is beyond them. Not every open window provides a landscape.

In his article 'Finestre sullo schermo', Antonio Costa indicates that a strong analogy exists between the window and the screen that harks back to Leon Battista Alberti's treatise *De pictura* (1435) where he introduced the principle of *ut pictura finestra*. Costa writes that 'the relationship between the framework and the principles of painterly perspective as defined by Leon Battista Alberti has led several film theorists to investigate the relationship between film and painting'.⁴³⁴ Some have seen in both a window onto the world, but film theorists in the late 1970s such as Jean-Louis Baudry and Stephen Heath criticized this Renaissance perspective, stressing instead that the camera is ideologically determined, that is, as a form of bourgeois ideology.⁴³⁵ While Costa does not comment on this, Baudry contends in his essay, 'Ideological Effects of the Basic Apparatus', that Renaissance perspective pretends to offer continuity and a transparent, objective view of reality in contrast to, for example, the Greek philosophers who conceived of space as discontinuous and heterogeneous.⁴³⁶ For Alberti, according to Baudry, the centre of space coincided with that of the eye; Baudry criticizes this view, which corresponds to that of classical cinema, because it does not show how the representation is constructed and thus ideologically determined. Therefore Baudry prefers a cinema that reveals its own constructed-ness. Today, we recognize this in not only pre-war avant-garde ideas, but also in such post-Baudry theorists as the

434 Antonio Costa, 'Finestre sullo schermo', in Letizia Bellocchio, ed., *Finestre. Atti della Scuola Europea di Studi Comparati* (Firenze: le Monnier, 2006), p. 80.

435 Jean-Louis Baudry, *L'effet cinéma* (Paris: Albatros, 1978). Teresa De Lauretis, Stephen Heath, eds., *Cinematic Apparatus* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1980). Zie ook: Jean-Louis Comolli, 'Technique and Ideology: Camera, Perspective, Depth of Field' (Parts 3 and 4), in Philip Rosen ed., *Narrative, Apparatus Ideology: A Film Theory Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 412-43. Also *deep staging*, used so often by Visconti, was interpreted as bourgeois ideology by Jean-Louis Comolli at the time, in contrast with the use of montage by the Soviet filmmakers. A critique against this appeared in David Bordwell, *On the History of Film Style*, (Cambridge, Mass./London: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 209.

436 Jean-Louis Comolli, 'Ideological Effects of the Basic Apparatus', in Rosen (1986), pp. 286-98.

French philosopher Gilles Deleuze.⁴³⁷ Instead of Baudry, Costa invokes Gérard Wajcman, who in his study *Fenêtre* (2004) argues that cinematic framing is not so much going back to the Albertian window – even though that is the basic model – as it is based on newer modes of *moving* windows in such modern vehicles as the train and the car.⁴³⁸ Before Wajcman, Jacques Aumont in *L'Œil interminable* had already indicated that the mobile gaze indicates a shift between the traditional painterly conception of space and the cinematic conception of representation.⁴³⁹ Costa shows that windows can sometimes act as mirrors in movies, such as when the main character in Stanley Kubrick's *Killer's Kiss* (1955), looking through the window at his neighbours, realizes that he leads such a life as well: '... a game in which the space becomes a maze: both reality and nightmare, vision and hallucination mingle such that they are indistinguishable from each other'. We also notice this self-questioning gaze through the window in Antonioni, according to Costa.⁴⁴⁰ Hitchcock's *Rear Window*, of course, would be the quintessential example of this tendency. Let us now consider some examples of windows as openings and mirrors in Visconti's films before comparing them to films from the 1930s, such as *La canzone dell'amore* and those by Jean Renoir.

Window openings in Visconti films

The uncertainty about the window frame in paintings such as Vermeer's *View of Delft* is sometimes reflected in Visconti's films. In *White Nights*, the spectator stands along with Mario in front of a bar window, looking in from the outside. A young woman in the bar smiles at him and writes 'Ciao!' on the steamed glass. On the right of the image we can see part of the window frame's vertical post. The left regions above and below the window frames are offscreen.⁴⁴¹ Where we *do* see the window frame within the film frame is in *La terra trema*. This film contains plenty of shots where the window frame is quite visible with characters arranged within it: Mara watering her basil and looking adoringly at the mason Nicola (Nicola Castorino), or Lucia (Agnese Giammona) and she looking anxiously outside after the wreckage of their brother 'Ntoni's boat has lost them their money, home, and reputation. Such images have been compared to the photographs of Giovanni Verga, the Sicilian writer from whose novel, *I Malavoglia* (1881), *La terra trema* was freely adapted. Visconti's shots are reminiscent, in particular, of

437 See in particular Deleuze's *Cinema 1. The Movement-Image* and *Cinema 2. The Time-Image*. Baudry's division in transparent and non-transparent cinema is strongly reminiscent of a similar division in transparent *immediacy* and non-transparent *hypermediacy* by Bolter and Grusin in their study *Remediation*, even if they do not connect this with a clear ideological meaning. Jay David Bolter & Richard Grusin, *Remediation. Understanding New Media* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000).

438 See Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey. Trains and Travel in the 19th Century* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), originally *Geschichte der Eisenbahnreise* (1978).

439 Gérard Wajcman, *Fenêtre. Chroniques du regard et de l'intime* (Lagrasse: Verdier, 2004). The English version of Aumont's text is Jacques Aumont, 'The Variable Eye, or the Mobilization of the Gaze', in Dudley Andrew, ed., *The Image in Dispute. Art and Cinema in the Age of Photography* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), pp. 231-58. See also Aumont 2007, pp. 51-85. Aumont also refers to Schivelbusch.

440 Costa 2006, p. 79.

441 In Chapter 9 we will see that this confusion may occur as well with mirrors when mirror frames are unclear.

Verga's photograph of a girl in an open window: *Bambina alla finestra di una casa a Novalucello* (1911). However, Verga's photographs, in all some 400 pieces, were found in his Sicilian house only in 1970 and then exhibited and published, decades after *La terra trema's* production.⁴⁴² We might as well be thinking of Nicolaas Maes's *Daydreamer* (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, c. 1650-1660). Incidentally, *La terra trema* also includes several shots of windows that are seen from the inside, as when the village gendarme, Don Salvatore (Rosario Galvagno), courts Lucia or when the neighbours curiously observe the family after its first big catch. The windows strikingly contain few real frames, so we stay close to Stoichita's wall holes or *embrasures*. In most other Visconti films, those frames *are* visible.⁴⁴³

In *Ossessione*, when Gino, hungover, looks outside through an open window, we see a visible frame. We notice the window style and see that one of the open panes is turned inside. In the reverse shot (Gino's POV) we see that the previously dull trattoria has become a large hive of activity with patrons enjoying the afternoon. The camera cuts back to Gino for whom the cheerful masses mean nothing. Then he suddenly spots his old friend, the Spaniard, among the crowd and is immediately alert. In *Bellissima*, Maddalena dresses to go to the photographer. She lives in the basement of a residential tenement and the grated window looking out onto the street is placed high up the wall. As a boy spies on her from the street, she scolds him. We see more people passing by the window, giving the impression of a real home along a real street.⁴⁴⁴ In *Rocco and His Brothers* the discovery of snow in the courtyard is not only a revelation to the Southern migrant family, Visconti also

442 Wladimiro Settemelli, *Giovanni Verga. Specchio e realtà* (Roma: Magma, 1976). See also Andrea Nemiz, *Capuana, Verga, De Roberto* (Palermo: Edikronos, 1982), Giovanni Garra Agosta, ed., *Verga, fotografo* (Catania: Giuseppe Maimone Editore, 1991), and Noa Steimatsky, 'Photographic *Verismo*. Cinematic Adaptation, and the Staging of a Neorealist Landscape', in: Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo eds., *A Companion to Literature and Film* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 214-16. Steimatsky indicates that what is important is not so much the direct relationship between Verga's photography and Visconti's filmic images but the larger similarity in attitude between them. By adapting even the scenery of *Acì Trezza*, the location of Verga's novel, and giving it these theatrical, choral qualities, Visconti appropriates Verga's combination of truth and poetry within his cinema. In a publication in *Fotostorie* (2007) Settemelli says that it is very unlikely that Visconti saw Verga's photographic glass plates of Sicily before making *La terra trema* even if both imagined the same world: http://www.anpi.it/patria_2007/002/00_LE_FOTOSTORIE_14.pdf. NB Visconti would have fallen in love with *Trezza* from a postcard given to him by the father of film critic Gianni Puccini. Schifano 2009, p. 242.

443 A few years after *La terra trema*, the documentary *Acì Trezza* (Ernesto Guida 1955) was shot in the same Sicilian fishermen's village. It is striking that the film refers to Verga but not to *La terra trema*. The film quite closely follows the development of Verga's story: the fishermen set sail, the *casa del nespolo* (the house by the medlar tree), the initial good catch, the storm, return of calm, one departs the village. One also notices a sentimental scene between a man with a carriage on the street and a girl on a balcony, reminiscent of Visconti's film. In short, *Acì Trezza's* themes and iconography are quite similar to those of *La terra trema*. Even the timbre of voice over Carlo d'Angelo reminds one of the warm male voice-over in Visconti's film. It is also noteworthy that one notices cars and a truck in the streets, in contrast to Visconti's version, thus raising the question whether *La terra trema* did not render archaic the situation just as in Robert Flaherty's classic *Nanook of the North* (1922). One of the central themes in Guida's documentary is the battle of man against nature, while the social context is kept out of the frame; thus, the film is not as overtly Marxist as is Visconti's.

444 The exteriors of Maddalena's house and garden were shot in Via Alberto da Giussano in the Prenestino quarter. Looking at the film, Visconti might have shot the interiors there as well. While Visconti shot many takes on location for *Bellissima*, such as at the tenements in Prenestino, at the restaurant Il Biondo Tevere (Ostiene) at the Tiber river, and also in Cinecittà, other shots were studio work, such as the dialogue scenes between Anna Magnani and Walter Chiari on the bank of the Tiber, recreated in Cinecittà.



Fig. 127 (left). *La terra trema* (Luchino Visconti 1948). Fig. 128 (right). Nicolaas Maes, *Girl at a Window*, known as 'The Daydreamer' (c. 1650-1660). Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.



Fig. 129-131 (above). *Ossessione* (Luchino Visconti 1943).

Fig. 132 (left). *Bellissima* (Luchino Visconti 1951).



Fig. 133 (below). *Rocco and His Brothers* (Luchino Visconti 1960).



shows Milan through *mobile* windows twice, first when the family arrives at the station, and then when Rocco and Nadia travel the city by tram. The city is thus invoked and framed by the tram windows' bars, creating different planes of action. Mitchell Schwarzer coined this mobile perception of the city a *zoomscape*, 'the overall arena of transformed architectural perception brought about by industrial technologies of motion and media'. In *Rocco's* tram rides, the mobility of the filmic gaze is caused by moving vehicles coming together, creating a firm bond between the characters, the city, and their mutual mobility.⁴⁴⁵

While in Visconti's early films and in *Rocco and His Brothers* a clear interaction takes place between interiors and exteriors through windows, this is much less the case later on. Windows directed towards the outside are missing from *Il lavoro*, *Vaghe stelle dell'Orsa*, *The Damned*, *Ludwig*, *Conversation Piece*, and *L'innocente*. We only occasionally see doors opening to the outside in, for example, *L'innocente*. In *Conversation Piece* even the *outside* – balconies with views of Rome designed by Mario Garbuglia – is a construction (see Chapter 3).⁴⁴⁶ In these later films vistas from one interior space to another one are more important than looking from inside to outside or vice versa. Even in later films that contain outdoor shots, such as *Vaghe stelle dell'Orsa*, *The Damned*, and *Ludwig*, there is hardly any relation between the exterior and interior scenes through windows or open doors. In his earliest films this connection *is* present, as well as in *Senso*, *Rocco and His Brothers*, *The Leopard*, and *Death in Venice*. *Death in Venice* contains moments when Aschenbach observes the Lido beach below his hotel room, looking through the window. Over his shoulder, we look downstairs – first, when he has just arrived and the beach is empty, and again when he decides to stay in Venice. By now the beach is crowded by tourists. The previously stressed-out composer relaxes at the thought of prolonging his stay, especially in the company of his beloved Tadzio. After an over-the-shoulder-shot, a reverse shot shows Aschenbach waving, possibly to Tadzio.

Just as in painting, film history possesses many examples of people looking out from inside. Unlike painting, however, we know quite a few examples of shots from the outside looking in. The aforementioned examples from *La terra trema* are just two of many where the figure is notably cut off and framed by the window. The frames of window openings act as double framings – a frame within the film frame. *Senso* provides a good example of this when Franz looks outside, eagerly admiring a locket trimmed with jewels. The camera is positioned outside looking inwards. The lovesick Livia wants Franz to have a souvenir, so she gives him a precious locket with her hair in it. Only when Livia says she is leaving does Franz embrace her briefly and moves away from the window. Its vertical posts stand perpendicular to the film image's horizontal frame. Nonetheless, vertical lines dominate through the window style, the curtains, and the two actors – just as we saw in Visconti's use

445 Mitchell Schwarzer, *Zoomscape. Architecture in Motion and Media* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004), p. 17.

446 Visconti himself said about the sets of *Conversation Piece*: 'I deliberately didn't want to shoot *Conversation Piece* in real exteriors, even if nothing would have been easier than that. [...] I preferred to focus me on a set of elements of Roman Baroque (e.g. the façade of Palazzo Falconieri, the friezes of Palazzo Madama) in order to rearrange them in complete freedom of position and proportion'. See Franca Faldini and Goffredo Fofi, eds., *L'Avventurosa storia del cinema italiano raccontato dai suoi protagonisti*, vol. 2 (Milano: Mondadori, 1984), p. 233.

of doors. The half opened windows and their curtains cover the sides of the back room, restricting our view considerably.

Window openings in the cinema of the 1930s. Renoir and others

Let's compare Visconti's handling of windows with those in films made prior to his career. In Renoir, we regularly see shots through window openings, from inside to outside or outside to outside. He continually frames actions simultaneously occurring in the background and the foreground. Windows here functions as thresholds, as transitions between two worlds that are clearly related to each other. The window separates but it connects as well. Finally, it can also create distance. In this context, Costa cites Roland Barthes's famous definition of the image: 'the picture is that of which I am excluded'.⁴⁴⁷ In their book on Jean Renoir, Faulkner and Duncan use the example of *La chienne* (1931).⁴⁴⁸ The opening scene takes place in the living room of the painter Legrand (Michel Simon). We are looking from the inside out through an open window. Across a courtyard we look through an opposite open window to the neighbours inside. At the end of the film, conversely, we watch from the outside in, as Legrand stands over the corpse of Lulù (Janie Marèse), his mistress, whom he has just murdered. The camera first films from the inside, standing behind Legrand, showing the bed through the doorway, and then moves to the outside and completes the scene through a curtain-framed window.⁴⁴⁹

Three examples from other Renoir films will illuminate this use of windows: *Le crime de M. Lange* (1936), *La bête humaine*, and *Une partie de campagne*. They are not selected at random: Visconti might well have seen *Le crime de M. Lange* while he was working for Renoir on *Une partie de campagne* between March and August 1936.⁴⁵⁰ *La bête humaine* was an important source for *Ossessione*.⁴⁵¹ And although he was not able to see the completed version of *Une partie de campagne* in the 1930s, there is solid evidence that he assisted with, and closely followed,

447 'L'immagine è ciò da cui io sono escluso'. Costa 2006, p. 85.

448 Faulkner and Duncan 2007, pp. 50, 54. Bazin 1980, p. 19.

449 Another Renoir film that highly frequently plays with frames of windows is *La grande illusion*, as was acknowledged by Faulkner and Duncan: 'Other familiar Renoir traits are to be found in *Grand Illusion* as well, such as the use of direct sound, or shooting through doors and windows to open up his interiors to the exterior, and vice-versa'. Faulkner & Duncan 2007, p. 91.

450 *Le crime de M. Lange* was announced with lots of publicity in January 1936 and on 24 January it had its premiere at the prestigious Parisian theatre Aubert-Palace, where it ran for weeks. Judging by the journals *Pour vous* and *La Semaine à Paris*, *Le crime de M. Lange* was present in Parisian cinemas for the entire first half of 1936. Renoir created a lot of promotion through the left-wing network, such as the magazine that he helped establish himself: *Ciné-Liberté*. Two sources indicate Visconti visited Renoir's set of *La vie est à nous* (1936) and thus first met Renoir's crew. Gaia Servadio in her biography cites Horst Horst: 'Visconti went to observe Renoir who was filming *La vie est à nous* in order to learn', and Henri Cartier-Bresson, the assistant-director, said that 'He turned up for the first time when we were half-way through the film'. Servadio 1983, p. 59, 61. Shooting of *La vie est à nous* took place in February-March 1936 at the Studios Francoeur and in the open air. The film was released on 7 April 1936 in a private screening. If Horst and Cartier-Bresson were right, Visconti and Renoir must have met around early March. Servadio, who claims Visconti was on the set in 1935, must have meant 1936. In the Horst biography by Lawford (1984), a visit to Renoir's set is not mentioned.

451 Renoir's *La bête humaine* was shown at the 1939 Venice film festival. The film was regularly released in Italy with the title *L'angelo del male* (Death Angel) either in 1942 or 1943. Cosulich claims it was 1942, but first reviews appeared in 1943 – when Visconti had already shot *Ossessione*. Callisto Cosulich, *Jean ...*

the production during the spring and summer of 1936.⁴⁵² The central location of *Le crime de M. Lange* is the courtyard of a residential complex that also houses a publisher's offices. Charles (Maurice Baquet), the concierge's son is in bed after a bicycle accident. He cannot look outside because a large billboard outside his window has been erected by the rogue publisher, Batala (Jules Berry). When Batala appears to have been killed in a train accident, the neighbours break down the board. The boy – and we spectators – suddenly get an inside view that overlooks the courtyard. This physical opening also suggests a spiritual expansion. In *La bête humaine* our first glimpse of the female protagonist, Séverine, is that of a coquettish woman with a cat on her lap, sitting in front of the window and watching her husband, the station superintendent, Roubaud, enter. Behind her, the unattractive railway station is visible. The background thus contrasts with the smartly-dressed and coiffured woman, foreshadowing the film's later conflict.

...*Renoir* (Roma: FICC, 1952), p. 26. At the time, Giuseppe de Santis, assistant director for *Ossessione*, praised the cinematography of *La bête humaine*, in particular the use of the landscape to sustain the characters' mood. He also thought Renoir had improved Émile Zola's novel (the basis for the film) by bringing in more compassion. Giuseppe De Santis, 'L'Angelo del male', *Cinema*, VIII, 159 (10 February 1943), pp. 86-7. When reviewing *Ossessione*, critic Guido Aristarco – one of the big defenders of Visconti's work – explicitly connected it with *La bête humaine*, even if in 1939 he had condemned Renoir's film as a 'sick film'. Guido Aristarco, *Corriere Padano*, 8 June 1943. Idem, *La Voce di Mantova*, 1 September 1939. See also Lunardo[Eugenio Ferdinando Palmieri], 'Cappello in testa', *Film*, 26 June 1943. Palmieri compared *Ossessione* with several examples of French Poetic Realism including *La bête humaine* and remarked that Visconti would have been better to have based his work on local Italian writers like himself [!]. In the postwar era Baldelli and Renzi compared the two films as well: Renzo Renzi, *Visconti segreto* (Bari: Laterza, 1994), p. 38-9, Pio Baldelli (Milano: Mazzotta, 1982), p. 24. Miccichè refers to this, see Lino Miccichè, *Visconti e il neorealismo. Ossessione, La terra trema, Bellissima* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1998/1990), pp. 68-9. He indicates Visconti mainly took over the triangular affair from Renoir, but Miccichè doesn't go into formal and iconographical similarities.

452 A detailed study of Visconti's involvement in the film can be found in Michèle Lagny, 'Une partie de campagne à Paris ou les oreilles débouchées', *Cinéma 5* (Spring 2003), pp. 79-88. See also Michèle Lagny, *Luchino Visconti. Vérités d'une légende* (Paris/Courbevoie: BiFi/Durante, 2002). Olivier Curchod, *Partie de campagne : une étude critique* (Paris: Nathan, 1995), pp. 13-24, treats the preproduction and the shooting of the film. See also Charles Tesson, 'La robe sans couture, la dame, le patron', *Cinémathèque 5* (Spring 1994), pp. 142-53. Visconti's script of the film is still at the Fondo Visconti in Rome. A photograph of Visconti holding this script, plus various other photographs of the shooting in which the young Visconti is visible are depicted in Guy Cavnac, Jean-Pierre Pagliano eds., *Une partie de campagne. Eli Lotar, photographies du tournage* (Paris: Edition de l'oeil, 2007). For original documents at the BiFi regarding Visconti's involvement in the costumes of *Une partie de campagne*, see BiFi, Fonds Brunius 774 (22 May 1936), 'Indications fournies par Visconti pour les costumes', and same date, 'Costumes'. For Visconti's purchase of plates and glasses for the set, see BiFi, Fonds Brunius 774, (27 May 1936), 'Accessoires à acheter', indicates e.g. 'assiettes – voir Visconti' and '10 verres déjà achetées par Visconti 30'. For the crew list of the film, see BiFi, Fonds Brunius 774 (26 May 1936), 'Collaborateurs "Une Partie de Campagne"'; BiFi, Fonds Brunius, 774, (6 June 1936), 'Situation au 6 Juin'; and BiFi, Fonds Brunius, 774, (25 June 1936), 'Une Partie de Campagne'. The latter contains a list with the categories *participation* and *pourcentage*. Here too Visconti was mentioned as part of the crew. Producer Pierre Braunberger promised a percentage to anyone involved in the production, 1% to Visconti. Nobody, however, earned a cent. Curchod, p. 11, shows Henri Cartier-Bresson and Visconti were together responsible for the collecting of accessories. Actress Sylvia Bataille has been most explicit in Visconti's involvement in the preproduction and production of the film. 'Visconti had gathered an impressive number of documents on the costumes of the period (1880), which he showed to Jean Renoir and Sylvia Bataille. He had done his research in the Musée des Arts Decoratifs and in books; he was scholarly and cultivated, and he planned the costumes with extreme care'. Servadio (1981), p. 61-2. According to Bataille one of Visconti's costumes was based on a painting by Auguste Renoir. Campari (1994), p. 51-2. Campari refers to Bruno Villien, *Luchino Visconti* (Milano: Vallardi, 1987).

In *Une partie de campagne*, Rodolphe (Jacques Brunius) and Henri (Georges d'Arnoux) lunch in front of the open window, while we look out from inside the room, like Rodolphe, and notice the mother (Jane Marken) and daughter (Sylvia Bataille) on swings in the background. He watches them with pleasure while Henri remains aloof. In a reverse shot, we see from the outside looking in. Both men play a deeper role in the narrative. When the action moves to the riverbank, their masks come off. As Gilles Deleuze points out: 'The test of life causes the roles to be dropped, and shows a good sort in the cynic, while the sentimental one is revealed as an unscrupulous seducer'.⁴⁵³ Sandro Bernardi bemusedly notes how remarkably quick this switch occurs in the film. The family who thinks it is watching, enjoying, and fishing is the one that is viewed, enjoyed, and fished. The shot through the open window speaks volumes in this respect.⁴⁵⁴ Ultimately, we look at the family from the two young men's perspective, while we followed initially the family's perspective, especially with the POV shot from the buggy as they approached the inn.

Olivier Curchod takes this even further. He argues that, in contrast to Maupassant's short story, the two men appear much earlier in Renoir's film. Their first glimpse of the family is that of the women on the swings. Their gazes are also multiplied by passing priests who look temptingly at the young daughter enjoying herself. Even little boys secretly watch the scene. In short, we have to deal with a multitude of viewers, which also says something about the painting that is often cited as the film's alleged inspiration, *La balançoire* by Renoir's father, Pierre-Auguste (1876).⁴⁵⁵ Following Baxandall's thesis, this gives the painting's motif a new dimension. Curchod concludes that the film is no mere a copy of the elder Renoir: 'the film shatters the pictorial reference – and the filmmaker frees himself from the cumbersome tutelage to better affirm the sole prerogatives of the cinema'.⁴⁵⁶ The voyeuristic gaze through the window in the film also plays an important role. Here we are closer to another, spicier, painting by Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *Les hasards heureux de l'escarpolette* (1767, Wallace Collection, London) where a man watches a woman on a swing so he can look under her skirt.

The use of the outward-directed view through the open window, where the actor functions as our stand-in, is certainly not a motive just in Renoir. It was already present in Romantic painting as well as in earlier cinematic works. Already in 1930, one year before Renoir's *La chienne*, the Italian Gennaro Righelli introduced the view out the window as the central motif in *La canzone dell'amore*, the first Italian talking picture. Here the girl Lucia (Dria Paola) takes care of the illegitimate child of her deceased mother, which ruins her betrothal to Enrico (Elio Steiner). Through the open window she looks into the house of the neighbour opposite, and sees how to change a baby's diapers, doing so while happily singing. When she later meets Enrico again, she does not dare to confess the truth, leading Enrico to suspect adultery

453 Deleuze 2005, *Cinema 2*, p. 84.

454 Bernardi 2002, p. 71-2.

455 See catalogue *Renoir/Renoir*, Cinémathèque française/ Musée d'Orsay (Paris: Editions de la Martinière, 2005), see also the accompanying website <http://education.francetv.fr/re noir/index.html?noredirection> [consulted 4 August 2014].

456 'Le film fait éclater la référence picturale – et le cinéaste s'affranchit de l'encombrante tutelle pour mieux affirmer les seules prérogatives du cinéma'. Olivier Curchod, 'Cinéma et peinture, septième art ou artisanat: Renoir père et fils', in: Aumont 2003, pp. 198-211.



Fig. 134 (above, left). *Le crime de M. Lange* (Jean Renoir 1936). Fig. 135 (above, right). *La bête humaine* (Jean Renoir 1938).

Fig. 136 (left). *Une partie de campagne* (Jean Renoir 1936).



Fig. 137 (below, left). *Quai des brumes* (Marcel Carné 1938). Fig. 138 (below, right). *Fari nella nebbia* (Gianni Franciolini 1942).

and to cruelly reject her. Home again, Lucia looks back at the neighbours, sad and resigned. When the child is claimed by its father, the loss shatters Lucia and she looks out for the third time, maddened with grief. Longing, sadness, and despair are successively portrayed through the open window, Lucia's window on the world.

Framing the face through windows regularly recurred in the cinema of the twenties, thirties, and forties, in particular by placing the camera on the opposite side of the window. Murnau's *Der letzte Mann* shows a woman in medium close-up who looks down through the upper lavatory doors. Her neck is sectioned horizontally by a bar of the revolving doors. When she sees the ex-doorman and realizes that he is now only a washroom attendant, she screams so loud that the door glass fogs up – a nice technique for expressing sound in a silent film (see also Chapter 7). At the end of Sternberg's *Morocco*, the camera shows Dietrich through a car window from the outside while she is looking outside. The shot is in medium close up and the car window acts establishes a frame around her head – a frame within the film frame. When the caravan with the legionnaire, Gary Cooper, pulls away, the camera shoots through a big Orientalist gate, which acts as another frame within the film frame like a doorway. In Sternberg's *Blonde Venus*, this covering of the body and the framing of the star's head recur when Dietrich looks through a window to the outside where it is pouring. The camera captures her again from the outside, showing only her head, framed by the window and its curtains. Similarly, in Carné's *Quai des brumes*, Jean Gabin and Michèle Morgan are framed through the bars of a window, looking outside at the rain and the desolate environment. This image was so powerful that it was widely used for the film's publicity campaign. According to Costa, the image of the person behind the window is an important motif in French Poetic Realist films. The subject is symbolically separated from the world and thus recognizes his or her own pitiable fate (for *Quai des brumes*, see also Chapter 7).⁴⁵⁷ Quite keen on appropriating French Poetic Realism in general (see Visconti's *Ossessione*), Italian cinema of the early 1940s reused this motif, for example, in Franciolini's truck driver melodrama *Fari nella nebbia*. Here Luisa Ferida's character watches the departing truck drivers – among whom is the man of her dreams – through a barred window. The camera angle and composition are substantially the same as those in *Quai des brumes* (for *Fari nella nebbia*, see also Chapter 7).

In rare cases we notice someone standing outside who is seen from inside. In *Senso*, Livia is frightened when she sees Franz suddenly behind the glass door of her balcony, a moment similar to the one in Pudovkin's *Mat*, when the son sees his girlfriend standing outside. Like him, we look through the window to the outside and see only the head and upper body of the woman. In post-war cinema, one of the most famous examples of a woman behind a window, filmed from the outside, is in *All That Heaven Allows* (Douglas Sirk, 1955), in which the bars of the window seem to imprison Cary (Jane Wyman), trapped in her own home and family while it is snowing outside. The window works here as a metaphor for her state of mind.

457 Costa 2006, p. 86. In addition to the example of *Quai des brumes* Costa mentions a formally very similar example of Gabin in front of a window in Carné's *Le jour se lève*, from which the film's story is told in flashback.

The road and the sea as anti-thesis of the frame

While framing through windows and doors sometimes suggests the literal and figurative sense of being imprisoned, the anti-thesis of this is *the road*. The road and the horizon function here as contrasts to the cramped surroundings of homebodies, regardless whether they are rich or poor. The landscape works as a state of mind, as if we are looking from the inside out, similar to what Stoichita wrote about Vermeer's painterly landscapes. The picture frame works as a kind of window frame. Does the film frame function likewise in landscapes where characters stand on, or walk along, a road?

In many thirties films, the road is a positive location, provided that you walk with a friend and not alone. At the end of such films, the two main characters walk optimistically towards the future. In Clair's *À nous la liberté*, the road is the escape from the drudgery of the factory, the hierarchy of the capitalist system and the lack of companionship. Money doesn't make our heroes happy. Émile is the wealthy manager of a record factory but is also an ex-con. He gives his factory to the workers and returns to his vagabond life with his prison buddy, Louis (Raymond Cordy). The camera films them from a respectful, low angle. Their earlier solidarity is restored though they continue to argue with each other as before. Inspired by *À nous la liberté*, Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1936) also ends with the tramp and his gamine (Paulette Goddard) walking down the road. Just as in Clair, we first see them close by and up front and then end by viewing them from behind and at a distance. Further along that road, a better future awaits these two misfits. In Renoir's *Les bas-fonds* Pepel and Natacha leave the night shelter after Kostylev's death and venture out. As in *À nous la liberté*, the camera shoots them from the front, while they radiantly and proudly walk forwards toward us. Unlike Clair, Renoir avoids counter shots and instead slowly backtracks the camera, permitting us to say goodbye to the story and the characters. The image blends into the title 'Fin'. After all the characters' suffering, the road provides an optimistic escape from stasis and offers a new start.⁴⁵⁸ An April 1940 article in the Italian magazine *Oggi* enthused over Renoir's optimism, because it contrasted with other French Poetic Realist films with their pessimistic endings, where the protagonists could not escape from their grim environment of slums, tramps, and night shelters.⁴⁵⁹ Indeed, *Les bas-fonds* was one of the few such films in which Gabin did not die at the end. It was released in Italy after the pessimistic films by Carné and Duvivier, and renamed as *Verso la vita* (On the Road towards Life). Not surprisingly in January 1940, Carné's *Le jour se lève* (*Daybreak*, 1939) – released in Italy with the title *Alba tragica* (Tragic Dawn) – was praised in *Oggi* but with the qualification that it lacked a 'redemption' à la Dostoevsky at the end of all that melancholy.⁴⁶⁰

In *Ossessione*, however, the road is not as unambiguously positive. The stranger, Gino, arrives via the causeway along the river at Giovanna and her husband's inn. For Gino, the road is a way to escape from his sedentary existence. He does so

458 Leo Baudry considers Renoir's back-tracking camera, moving faster than the characters, as creating a sense of pessimistic entrapment and therefore not comparable with the final scene of *Modern Times*.

Leo Baudry, *Jean Renoir. The World of His Films* (London: Robson Books, 1977), p. 48.

459 Proteo [Alberto Savinio], 'Verso la vita', *Oggi*, (20 April 1940), p. 22.

460 Idem, 'Alba tragica', *Oggi*, (13 January 1940), p. 21.

with Giovanna, but after she backs out and returns to the inn, he continues alone. Once they have returned to each other and have killed her husband, he wants to, but cannot, leave because she fears poverty and wants to earn money. Actually, she doesn't want to leave at all. Gino's vagabond buddy, the Spaniard, tries to persuade him to choose the road again but he eventually backs off after an angry Gino beats him. The latter regrets his action – too late. The Spaniard is next seen on the causeway and does not look back. Later he will turn in Gino to the police – a scene with which Visconti's leftist friends were dissatisfied because the Spaniard had to depict the film's leftist conscience. In Visconti's version, the Spaniard seems more like a rejected lover who avenges himself.

In the final scene the road seems to be a way to a better future as it was in *À nous la liberté*, *Modern Times*, and *Les bas-fonds*. Gino and Giovanna have reconciled, Giovanna is pregnant and they have made plans for their lives. Yet, *Ossessione* denies the fairly leftist association of the road as a positive closure, because the protagonists are punished for the murder. The location almost seems to exert a spell: you can check out any time you like but you can never leave. Giovanna is killed in a car crash and Gino is arrested by the police. It is the same moral shared by such archetypical French Poetic Realist films as Carné's *Quai des brumes*, *Hotel du Nord* (1938), and *Le jour se lève*, Julien Duvivier's *Pépé le Moko* (1937) and Chenal's *Le dernier tournant*. Because of the murder, the protagonist cannot use the road as a means of escape (for *Le dernier tournant* and *Quai des brumes*, see Chapter 7).

Visconti would let his characters perish for moralistic reasons in many of his films. In *La terra trema* the grandfather dies because Cola's departure produces degrading misery. In *Rocco and His Brothers*, Nadia dies at the hand of Simone after Rocco's family force him to abandon her. In *Vaghe stelle dell'Orsa* Gianni commits suicide because he pursues an incestuous relationship with his married sister, Sandra. In *The Damned*, the Lady Macbeth-like Sophie overplays her hand in her lust for power, is raped by her own son and is finally forced to commit suicide. Gustav von Aschenbach loses himself in his love for Tadzio and dies (*Death in Venice*), and Ludwig drowns himself (we suspect) and his psychiatrist Dr. von Gudden (*Ludwig*). Finally, in *L'innocente*, Tullio commits suicide in his own home after his mistress Teresa, the only person he loves, rejects him. Tullio's suicide was absent in D'Annunzio's novel but Visconti and his screenwriter, Suso Cecchi D'Amico, found it necessary to punish him for his *Übermensch*-like behaviour – he has murdered his wife's bastard child and thinks he can get away with it (see also Chapter 6 for *L'innocente*).⁴⁶¹ Many of these cases concern homebodies who cannot or will not leave their homes (Giovanna's inn, Gianni's family house, the Essenbeck villa, Ludwig's castles), their original villages (Aci Trezza) or their newly adopted cities (Milan, Venice) and will therefore die or kill themselves or others. The location here seems to exert a strong, negative force, and in several cases seems to punish those who leave. 'Home' therefore has a very ambiguous and even perilous meaning in Visconti's films.

461 Interview with Suso Cecchi D'Amico, 26 October 1984.



Fig. 139-140. *Á nous la liberté* (René Clair 1931).



Fig. 141-142. *Les bas-fonds* (Jean Renoir 1936).



Fig. 143-144. *Ossessione* (Luchino Visconti 1943).

In *Ossessione* the road plays a leading role, but has important supporting roles in *La terra trema* (the sunny roads where ‘Ntoni strolls with his fiancée), *Senso* (the voyage of Marquis Ussoni across the battlefields and Livia’s trip to Verona), *The Leopard* (the *villeggiatura* with the carriages over the Sicilian mountains), *Vaghe stelle dell’Orsa* (the drive from Geneva to Volterra at the beginning), and *Death in Venice* (Aschenbach’s arrival by boat). The images of Livia’s carriage riding to Verona is reminiscent of a painting by Giuseppe De Nittis, *La traversata degli Appennini*



Fig. 145 (left). Giuseppe De Nittis, *La traversata degli Appennini* (1867). Museo di Capodimonte, Naples. Fig. 146 (right). *Senso* (Luchino Visconti 1954).

(1867, Museo di Capodimonte, Naples) as well as his *La strada da Napoli a Brindisi* (Indianapolis Museum of Art, 1872). Incidentally, the latter painting also recalls *Ossessione*. On the other hand, it is striking how little the road is shown in Visconti's later films. In *The Damned* it hardly occurs, except for the shots of Joachim's funeral; *Ludwig* and *L'innocente* get no further than the façades and gardens of the main characters' villas and castles; and *Conversation Piece* doesn't even go beyond the apartments' (fake) balconies. While in *Rocco and His Brothers* the tram ride in the opening scene conveys the metropolis' overwhelming effect on the immigrant family, and the later ride with Rocco and Nadia embracing each other highlights their short-lived urban romance, in *Bellissima* the road invokes only the daily routine of Roman urban traffic, not a pathway to freedom. Aschenbach's pursuit of Tadzio through an increasingly pestilent Venice does not symbolize freedom either. The only films in which we can truly speak of the road set within a landscape are *Ossessione*, *Senso* (to a lesser extent) and *The Leopard*, plus the opening scenes of *Vaghe stelle dell'orsa* and *Death in Venice*. The theme of the travel, therefore, is not a major one in Visconti. Characters have either already arrived at their locations or have yet to leave. In *Ossessione's* penultimate scene on the banks of the river Po, the landscape expresses and evokes poetic associations with melodrama, as in the final act of Puccini's *Manon* where Des Grieux watches Manon die in French Guiana. Maurice Leloir's recreation of that scene (*Manon Lescaut*, 1892, Dahesh Museum, New York) clearly resembles Gino and Giovanna on the banks of the Po. Defeated, Des Grieux sits in the sand next to Manon's corpse.⁴⁶²

Leo Baudry argues that in contrast to Renoir's films – whose streets he finds 'melancholic' – the street in neorealist cinema always remains a set, except for the scene in *Roma città aperta* (*Open City*, Roberto Rossellini, 1945) where Pina (Anna Magnani) is shot: 'In that moment it moves and becomes a fatality that drags people away'.⁴⁶³ But even during *Ossessione's* production, Italian film critics recognized the power of the (real) road in Visconti's film. In the journal *Schermo* (1942), Aldo Scagnetti stressed the close relationship between the characters and the setting: 'In *Ossessione* the close psychological connection between the

462 In 1939 Carmine Gallone directed an adaptation of *Manon Lescaut* in the Cinecittà studios with Alida Valli and Vittorio De Sica in the leads which was released on 2 February 1940 in Italy.

463 Baudry 1977, p. 50.

humans and the things never lacks, along with the characters who are tortured and disgracefully caught by their mistakes, we find the dramatic drought of the peripheric grasslands, the urban streets, the highways; the summer relentlessness of some mornings stretched by the presence of a river with absorbed banks'.⁴⁶⁴ In that sense, Visconti in *Ossessione* appropriated Renoir's 'melancholic' street scenes.

In addition to the road as a way out, *the sea* also functions as infinite space, offering an alternative to the closeness of the locales where Visconti's films take place. While Aschenbach in *Death of Venice* may arrive by sea, he can no longer use it to get away. At the end of the film, the sea is only a figurative way out. Despite the importance of photography in the film (see Chapter 4), the colour, composition, and framing in *Death in Venice* are strongly reminiscent of painting. Previous scholars have noted this as did the film's producer, Mario Gallo: 'Of course a huge photographic documentation was used, but Visconti himself was also a giant film archive and he had a vast pictorial knowledge. His images were inspired by paintings, by films, and by his memories. I have met few directors who dealt so precisely with the image'.⁴⁶⁵ The opening images of Aschenbach's arrival by steamer in Venice, drenched in atmospheric pink and pale blue, are comparable to the work of William Turner or, to be closer to the period of the film (ca.1911-1912), to the paintings, watercolours and pastels of Venice by Claude Monet, Giovanni Boldini, James McNeill Whistler, and John Singer Sargent. We can find similar examples of Visconti's pink and blue Venetian dawn in Turner's *Venice: San Giorgio Maggiore – Early Morning* (1819, Tate Gallery, London), Whistler's *The Giudecca* (1879-1880) and *The Lagoon, Venice: Nocturne in Blue and Silver* (1880, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), and particularly in Monet's *San Giorgio Maggiore by Twilight, Canal Grande, Palazzo da Mula* and *Palazzo Ducale* (all 1908).⁴⁶⁶ Boldini's *View of Venice* (c. 1895, private collection) shows a smoking steamer puffing black and white plumes of smoke as it either approaches or embarks from a Venetian quay. It is also tempting to consider the art collection of the great conductor, Arturo Toscanini, Visconti's former neighbour, which contained such works as the sunsets by Vittore Grubicy de Dragon – from whom Toscanini had a large collection – and Edoardo Dalbono's *Pesce spada in vista* (1880).⁴⁶⁷ However, Dalbono's *Il porto a Venezia* (1890, GNAM, Rome) seems even closer to the images of *Death in Venice* because of their use of pink and blue.⁴⁶⁸ In their combination of pink and blue, *Death in Venice's* images are also reminiscent of silent films from the 1910s, where pink tinting and blue toning were often combined for picturesque and dramatic effect.

464 Scagnetti, 'Personaggi e paesaggio in *Ossessione*', *Schermo* 8 (August 1942), p. 34.

465 Interview with Mario Gallo, 21 May 2004.

466 Monet often painted dawns and dusks in combinations of pink and blue, e.g. in his series of the Rouen cathedral and Waterloo Bridge. In modern art we encounter these pink and blue dawns as well, as in Carlo Carrà's beach scene *Spiaggia a Bocca di Magra* (1952). Here the beach is even more empty than in the final scene in Visconti's film.

467 Vittore Grubicy DeDragon, *Sera di Maggio/ La pesca degli agoni* (1887), in Palminteri Mateucci 2007, pp. 70-1. Idem, *Vacche/ L'abbeverata della sera* (1888-1908, resumed 1915), in Palminteri Mateucci 2007, pp. 72-3. Edoardo Dalbono, *Pesce spada in vista* (c. 1880), in Palminteri Mateucci 2007, pp. 100-1.

468 <http://www.gnam.beniculturali.it/index.php?it/23/gli-artisti-e-le-opere/64/il-porto-di-venezia>.



Fig. 147 (left). William Turner, *Venice: San Giorgio Maggiore – Early Morning* (1819). Tate Gallery, London. Fig. 148 (right). *Death in Venice* (Luchino Visconti 1971).



Fig. 149 (left). Claude Monet, *San Giorgio Maggiore by Twilight* (1908), National Museum Wales, National Museum Cardiff. Fig. 150 (right). *Death in Venice* (Luchino Visconti 1971).



Fig. 151 (left). Giovanni Boldini, *View of Venice* (c. 1895). Private collection. Fig. 152 (right). *Death in Venice* (Luchino Visconti 1971).

In the diva film, *Fior di male* (Carmine Gallone, 1915), Lyda Borelli walks past a blue and pink sunset over the sea and is reduced to a (moving) silhouette.⁴⁶⁹

Light blue and light pink dominate in all of *Death in Venice's* beach scenes, especially in the final scene though the colour is almost bleached out. The sea is no longer distinguishable from the sky, the horizon disappears, just as Aschenbach's figurative horizon, his life, fades away. Aschenbach's (and our) visit to Venice begins in the opening scene, and the light at the film's end signifies the end of his (and our) stay. After the claustrophobic chase through the dark, infected Venice

⁴⁶⁹ The moment is visible in Peter Delpue's compilation film *Lyrical Nitrate* (1991). It is a combination of blue toning and pink tinting.

with its narrow alleys, the final scene offers release through its lightness and its wide horizontal vista. As producer Mario Gallo recalled, 'We shot the beginning of the film in 15 days, i.e. the shootings lasted barely fifteen minutes and then the specific light had gone, and we went filming elsewhere. I remember that we ate quite early every morning, we had fantastic food baskets, waiting for the dawn. Then we filmed and then the rest. So the nights were quite short. Pasqualino [De Santis, the director of photography] decided exactly when it was still possible to shoot: now we may still work, now we cannot anymore. We always filmed that light of the Venetian dawn which is so incredible, so Visconti was right to want it'.⁴⁷⁰ Piero Tosi remembered that, 'Originally they tried to shoot the final scene on the beach without artificial light, but there wasn't such sensitive film yet at that time, so that tools were needed, large sheets'.⁴⁷¹

The images of the sea are clearly not realistic but symbolic, metaphysical, just like *Death in Venice's* other locations. Michael Mann, the author's youngest son, referred to Mann's interpretation of the sea: "'The sea", we find later in the address "Lübeck as a Way of Life" is "not merely a landscape"; it is "the experience of the infinite, of the void and of death, a metaphysical dream". I recalled these words with pleasure as I repeatedly enjoyed your film on two continents. You have succeeded, my dear Mr. Visconti, in conveying that "metaphysical dream" through the camera, and for this I thank you'.⁴⁷²

470 Interview with Mario Gallo, 21 May 2004.

471 Interview with Piero Tosi, 14 April 2004.

472 Michael Mann to Luchino Visconti, October 1971, Münchner Stadtbibliothek Monacensia, München.

Mobile Framing and Visual Explorations

‘Visconti is also in the habit of using a special kind of panning shot which moves very slowly over a very wide arc; this is the only camera movement which he allows himself, for he excludes all tracking shots and, of course, every unusual camera angle’.⁴⁷³ When André Bazin wrote his seminal text on Visconti’s *La terra trema*, which originally appeared in *Esprit* in December 1948, he failed to recognize one important tracking shot, and was as yet unaware that mobile framing combined with long takes would become a Visconti trademark.

In this chapter we will see how Visconti turns filmic space into *mobile space* by moving actors from foreground to background along long corridors and, preferably, through various doors, creating a constant series of new perspectives – literally and figuratively. At other moments, the dynamics of mobile spaces are created by the characters’ movement through space or by *mobile framing*: the camera closely tracks with them and substantially increases the film set’s three-dimensional feel: for example, when Tancredi and Angelica in *The Leopard* move from room to room during the Palazzo Ponteleone ball. While Tancredi guides his fiancée, we are also invited to gaze on the opulent interiors and the aristocratic guests in a flow of human and camera movement. Visconti’s tracking shots have no direct equivalents in painting, even if his tracking forward through deeply staged images harks back to classic genre painting, and his lateral tracking seems to build on panoramic painting. Nevertheless, painting may *suggest* movement but film *shows* it.

The element of *time* plays an important role. Truly, some of Visconti’s tracking shots, such as the opening sequence of *The Leopard*, the shots of the journey to Italy under the opening credits in *Vaghe stelle dell’Orsa*, or the incoming steamer at the beginning of *Death in Venice* can be conceived of as displacements in *space* but also in *time*. Where we go forwards physically, we return to the past mentally – a past where a different, slower rhythm prevails and where time seems to have been halted, frozen in a Proustian way. As Gilles Deleuze writes of Visconti’s tracking

473 André Bazin, *What is cinema?*, Vol. II (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. 43. The text originally appeared in the journal *Esprit* in December 1948. When Bazin wrote his text, he could not have yet seen *Osessione* as only Visconti’s second film *La terra trema* had been released in France. *Osessione*, his debut, could not be shown in France because of copyright infringement. In 1939 Pierre Chenal had adapted James M. Cain’s *The Postman Always Rings Twice* as *Le dernier tournant*. *Osessione* was a free adaptation of the same novel but the Italians had never settled copyrights. Chenal’s production company sued Visconti and his production company in 1946, when they tried to rerelease *Osessione*. A Milanese court ruled a verdict in Visconti’s favour ten years later. See Miccichè 1998/ 1990, p. 30, n. 10.

shots: ‘At the beginning of *Sandra* [*Vaghe stelle dell’Orsa*], when the heroine returns to the house where she was born, and stops to buy the black headscarf that she will cover her head with, and the cake she will eat like magic food, she does not cover space, she sinks into time. And in a film a few minutes long, *Appunti su un fatto di cronaca*, a slow tracking shot follows the empty path of the raped and murdered school-girl, and comes back to the fully present image to load it with a petrified perfect tense, as well as with an inescapable future perfect. [...] The tracking shots of Resnais and Visconti, and Welles’s depth of field, carry out a temporalization of the image or form a direct time-image’.⁴⁷⁴ Deleuze too makes a comparison with Proust: ‘The direct time-image always gives us access to that Proustian dimension where people and things occupy a place in time which is incommensurable with the one they have in space. Proust indeed speaks in terms of cinema, time mounting its magic lantern on bodies and making the shots coexist in depth’.⁴⁷⁵

The present chapter will elaborate on Visconti’s mobile framing by means of *pan shots*, *tracking shots*, and *crane shots*, in width, in depth or in combinations of the two. This will involve panoramic painting, such other filmmakers as Jean Renoir’s use of pans and tracking shots, plus Visconti’s typical motif of *visual exploration and discovery* through the camera. First, we need to explain Visconti’s use of *mobile space* and *depth of focus* in order to create a trajectory from the *long take*, linked to deep staging, towards *mobile framing*.

Mobile spaces, mobile framing

Visconti loves spaces that gradually open up and that prove to be bigger than their initial appearance, similar to the paintings of long corridors, interrupted by doorframes, by Samuel van Hoogstraten. Unlike *mobile framing*, in which the camera moves, one may refer to them as *mobile spaces* – movement within the *mise en scène*. This is shown when people pass through corridors, opening up not *one* door, but one after another. In *The Leopard* Tancredi arrives at the Salina residence during bad weather. The servant Mimi trots as fast as he can through the corridors, opening one door after another, to announce the good news to the family.

In *Senso*, Visconti has Livia open one door after another during one of the film’s most dramatic sequences, when she decides to give the freedom fighters’ money to her lover so he can bribe a doctor, desert, and avoid combat. Sound aptly sustains the visuals: a crescendo in Anton Brückner’s *Seventh Symphony* accompanies Livia’s throwing open the doors and characterizes her emotional outburst. Earlier in *Senso*, Visconti frames a similar, if less dramatic, passage through a corridor to the background when Livia and Franz walk through several doorways to the back of the loft where he is hiding. The actors’ movement increase and the door frames the three-dimensional experience. In Visconti, the *corridor* can function as *motif* – the actors walk towards the back while the camera remains fixed.⁴⁷⁶ The three-

474 Deleuze 2005, *Cinema 2*, p. 37.

475 Ibid., p. 37-8.

476 When considering the houses of Visconti’s youth, this corridor motif seems to have a causal link. Visconti grew up in spacious environments where the prospects of long corridors, interrupted by doorframes, were very normal, such as Palazzo Visconti in Milan, Villa Erba in Cernobbio at Lake Como, or the neighbouring villa of his grandfather, Villa Olmo near Como.



Fig. 153-154. *Senso* (Luchino Visconti 1954).



Fig. 155-156. *The Damned* (Luchino Visconti 1969).



Fig. 157-158. *La signora di tutti* (Max Ophüls 1934).

dimensional effect of the character opening and passing through several doors had already occurred in *Tosca*, on which Visconti was assistant-director. The experience might have well inspired him (see below).

The Damned features two contrasting shots in which someone walks to the back of the image, and in which Visconti uses a special type of lighting, as though the character passes through a kind of tunnel. First, Sophie, the mother, looks for her son, Martin, and finds him at the back of the attic, cowering, and terrorized by her brother Konstantin. At the front, a servant, presumably Konstantin's accomplice, sneaks away. Such settings featuring a dark foreground and an exposed centre plan are reminiscent of Dutch seventeenth-century paintings like Vermeer's *Love Letter* (see Chapter 8). Later, when Martin has the upper hand over his mother, he walks towards her. In contrast to the first shot where the foreground was dark and the corridor illuminated, now the front is lit and the corridor dark. Beyond the corridor, a lighted room appears where Sophie is getting dressed for her wedding. It is a macabre marriage since it will also mean her death at Martin's instigation. Like a black shadow, his menacing appearance already predicts this.

Before Visconti, the motif of vistas through long passages was already prominent in the films of Max Ophüls, especially in *La signora di tutti*. The beginning contains a remarkable elliptical long take, when the family patriarch holds a family council after his daughter, Gaby, instigates a teacher's suicide. Kept outside of the room, she listens to the excited voices inside. Gaby collects the dishes in the dining room on a tray and walks out. The camera moves with her but stops at the threshold of the room where the family is meeting. She walks to the back of a long corridor, opens the kitchen door, and puts the dishes away. She then comes back to the front of the frame, caressing her dog while she hears her father groan and then returns to the dining room, where the camera rotates with her until she is back in her original position, thus creating a full ellipsis. As in *The Damned's* second example, the rear plan is illuminated though the area is farther away. Unlike *The Damned* though, the hallway contains several light sources, giving Gaby's hair a glamorous shine and eliminating any possible dark sections while she listens to her father's tirade.

Visconti's use of space is noteworthy in that his characters stand in *long* corridors, and always lean on walls or poles for physical and emotional support, when they feel weak or desperate. Mental and physical collapses often coincide in his films. In *Senso*, when Livia needs to let go of Franz, she leans on the corridor wall in her countryside villa. After she has gone insane and stumbles through Verona calling out his name, after she has managed to get him killed, she leans against the walls again. This motif of women leaning against walls in moments of collapse was very common in fifties Hollywood films, as Matthias Müller's experimental compilation *Home Stories* (1990) indicates. This motif is also evident in Weimar cinema as in *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, Robert Wiene, 1919) or Murnau's *Der letzte Mann*. Of course it is a common motif in opera – Maria Callas did it constantly.

Deep staging versus deep focus

Bazin was lyrical about Visconti's *deep focus* in *La terra trema*: 'If this is not, strictly speaking, the first time depth of focus has been used outside the studio, it is at least the first time it has been used as consciously and as systematically as it

is here out of doors, in the rain, and even in the dead of night, as well as indoors in the real-life settings of the fishermen's homes'.⁴⁷⁷ In *Theatre to Cinema* (1997) Brewster and Jacobs indicate that in the silent era, filmmakers were aware that the image would blur when the camera came too close to the diegetic elements. Until the end of the 1910s filmmakers wanted all the diegetic planes to be sharp and thus avoided getting the camera too close to persons or objects. Danish filmmaker Urban Gad wrote that while the blurry image in *pictorialist* photography could perhaps be understood as artistic, 'however, these means are inappropriate for cinematography, because technical difficulties make them impossible, and because films, as well as pictorial demands, must also meet dramatic ones'.⁴⁷⁸ Faces must remain recognizable, Gad wrote. Others disagreed – if everything in the picture was sharp, then the trivial was just as important as the key elements. Filmmakers did not always aim for total clarity within the frame: close ups that were partially out of focus were not uncommon in the 1910s. As Barry Salt observes, one of the most notable innovators of depth of field in the 1920s, at least in the US, was Erich von Stroheim.⁴⁷⁹ In his obsessive pursuit of realism Stroheim wanted to film inside rooms while simultaneously showing external action through windows and doors. This meant that the light levels within the interior sets had to be as bright as the sunlight outside. In *Foolish Wives* (1922) this did not yet result in a deep focus in the modern sense of a concurrently sharp foreground and background, though Von Stroheim experimented with pulling and racking focus in combination with a mirror (see also Chapter 10),⁴⁸⁰ but in *Greed* (1924) Stroheim managed to realize this deep focus by using a 30mm focal length lens.⁴⁸¹ Stroheim was also famous for filming in actual rooms or on sets where ceilings were provided. This meant that backlight from above or behind was not available and sets had to be lit with floodlights on floor stands. Visconti's cameramen would often encounter the same problem while filming in existing palaces and villas though we regularly see fragments of ceilings in his films.

477 Bazin (2005), p. 43. In Vol. I of *What is Cinema*, Bazin also writes: 'The most "aesthetic" of the neorealists, Luchino Visconti, gives just as clear a picture as Welles of the basic aim of his directorial art in *La Terra Trema*, a film almost entirely composed of one-shot sequences, thus clearly showing his concern to cover the entire action in terminable deep-focus panning-shots'. André Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, pp. 37-8.

478 As quoted in Brewster and Jacobs 1997, pp. 171-2; originally, Urban Gad, *Filmen, dens midler og maal* (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel/ Nordisk Forlag, 1919), p. 76.

479 Salt 1992, p. 163.

480 Stroheim uses a *pulling and racking focus* when the perfidious Russian Count (Stroheim himself) uses a pocket mirror to spy on his victim, a wealthy American lady (Miss DuPont) who pulls off her wet clothes. In a mirror shot, we first see von Stroheim sharp in the foreground and the woman out of focus in the background. Then the attention changes to the woman in the background by having her in sharp focus and the man no longer so. See also Renaud Bezombes, 'Ecran-souvenir', *Cinématographe* 50 (September 1979), p. 16.

481 Incidentally, even in Germany filmmakers experimented with deep focus, such as *Variété* (1925) by E.A. Dupont. In 1920s Germany experiments with wide-angle lenses were more frequent. In the 1920s and 1930s *Greed* was not shown in Italy, so Visconti at most may have seen it in Paris.

Deep focus, a salient feature of Visconti's films, arrived relatively late in Italy. Mario Soldati and Fedor Ozep experimented with it in *La principessa Tarakanova* (1938) and Soldati would then make it his trademark.⁴⁸² In *Fari nella nebbia*, the director, Gianni Franciolini, constructed some eye-catching deep-focus shots (for use of *repoussoir* in *Fari nella nebbia*, see also Chapter 7).⁴⁸³ Franciolini was already familiar with the new technique, having been second-unit director for *La principessa Tarakanova*. Aldo Tonti, *Fari nella nebbia*'s cinematographer, later became one of the two cameramen, along with Domenico Scala, on *Ossessione*.⁴⁸⁴ Gregg Toland, famous for his use of deep-focus shots as cinematographer on Welles's *Citizen Kane*, was already experimenting with deep focus during the production of *The Grapes of Wrath* (John Ford, 1940) in 1939. Still, *The Grapes of Wrath* came out in Italy (under the title *Furore*) and in France only in 1947. The film may not, therefore, have had any influence on *Ossessione*, only on Visconti's later films.⁴⁸⁵ Toland went even further in his deep-focus experiments in *Kane*, but it seems improbable that Visconti would have seen it until after the war – it was released in Italy only in April 1950.⁴⁸⁶ Yet in 1939 Toland did the cinematography for Ratoff's *Intermezzo*, which featured remarkable deep-focus long shots of the interior scenes. Between autumn 1941 and spring 1942, *Intermezzo* was distributed in Italy as one of the few remaining American films to be seen during the war years (for *Intermezzo*, see also Chapters 4 and 10).⁴⁸⁷ Nevertheless, it is likely that Visconti took deep-focus technique from Italian cinema rather than America or France.

Renoir's use of depth of field, particularly in *La règle du jeu*, has been long discussed by, among others, Bazin, who felt that this demonstrated Renoir's realism, by Jean Mitry, denying Bazin's proposition, and by Gilles Deleuze, referencing

482 The cinematographer for *La principessa Tarakanova* was the German Curt Courant, who soon after would be responsible for the cinematography of Renoir's *La bête humaine* and for *Le jour se lève* by Marcel Carné. Before that, he had provided the cinematography for *Frau im Mond* (1929) by Fritz Lang, *Coeur de lilas* (1931) by Anatole Litvak and *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934) by Alfred Hitchcock. See Philips 2004, pp. 46-50, 135-6, 141-2, 194-5.

483 Adriano Aprà to the author, 13 March 2008. Aprà thinks deep focus was introduced in Italy by Ozep and thus would have been adopted by Soldati. Franciolini, by the way, had an international focus: he had been trained at the Parisian École de Journalisme and had also worked there as assistant-director. Watching DVD copies of TV broadcasts of *La principessa Tarakanova* and *Fari nella nebbia*, it is rather hard to recognize deep-focus imagery because of the poor image quality. *Repoussoirs* on the foreground (half cut off objects like armrests, bottles and flower bouquets) are rather presented *out of focus*. Poor image quality here obstructs solid research.

484 More similarities between *Ossessione* and the aforementioned films exist. *Ossessione*'s producer, Libero Solaroli, had been production leader of *La principessa Tarakanova*, while its editor, Mario Serandrei, had done the editing on *Fari nella nebbia*. Dhia Christiani, playing the bashful prostitute in *Ossessione*, also had a supporting part in *Fari nella nebbia*. Osvaldo Civirani was not only set photographer for *Ossessione* but also for *La principessa Tarakanova* and *Fari nella nebbia*. For his contributions to these three films, see Osvaldo Civirani, *Un fotografo a Cinecittà. Tra negativi, positivi e belle donne* (Roma: Gremese, 1995), pp. 36-9, 45-51.

485 Salt 1992, pp. 196-7.

486 The earliest that Visconti could have seen the film was in July 1946, where it was released in Paris.

487 *Intermezzo*, a remake of a Swedish film from 1938, was the American debut of Swedish actress Ingrid Bergman. From 1939, most American films disappeared from Italian screens, when the Hollywood studios like MGM, Paramount, Warner and 20th Century Fox blocked distribution to Italy when the Fascist state monopolized the distribution sector (The Alfieri Law 1938). Only smaller companies like Disney and Universal persisted. See Francesco Bono, 'Nel segno del Monopolio. Il mercato, i film, il pubblico', in Ernesto G. Laura, Alfredo Baldi, eds., *Storia del cinema italiano, vol. VI, 1940-1944* (Venezia/Roma: Marsilio/Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, 2010), pp. 409-18.



Fig. 159 (left). *Fari nella nebbia* (Gianni Franciolini 1942). Fig. 160 (right). *Intermezzo* (Gregory Ratoff 1939).



Fig. 161-162. *La règle du jeu* (Jean Renoir 1939).

the Bazin – Mitry debate.⁴⁸⁸ While Bazin argued that deep focus required the viewer to organize his own perception of the image, Mitry responded that looking in *depth of field* was an equally strict visual organisation that forced the viewer to look in a specific way. Yet Bazin argued that this deep-focus naturalism was achieved, paradoxically, by an *excess of theatricality*, as in *La règle du jeu*. Barry Salt adamantly criticized this: ‘For the last time, there is no “deep focus” in Jean Renoir’s films, just extensive use of staging in depth, sometimes beyond the limits of sharp focus. And occasionally he uses a surreptitious focus-pull to sharpen the background slightly when the main interest in the shot moves there, and vice-versa’.⁴⁸⁹ Watching the DVD of *La règle du jeu* confirms Salt’s statement, objects close to the foreground are presented out of focus.⁴⁹⁰ In *Ossessione*, moreover, the background is remarkably *out of focus* in Visconti’s medium shots and close ups so

488 Deleuze 2005, *Cinema 2*, pp. 104-5 and 289 (n. 16). Deleuze refers to André Bazin, ‘William Wyler ou le janséniste de la mise-en-scène’, *Revue du cinéma*, 10/11 (February-March 1948), and Jean Mitry, *Esthétique et psychologie du cinéma* (Ed. Universitaires), II, p. 40.

489 Salt 1992, p. 204.

490 DVD *La règle du jeu*, Homescreen/ABC Distribution 2009. In addition, Criterion produced their first DVD in 2004 which was followed by an updated DVD/Blu-Ray release in 2011.

that the viewer's attention is directed to the characters (*shallow focus*) according to conventional cinematography. On the other hand, sometimes people or objects in the foreground were shot out of focus to shift attention to the center plan. *Panfocus shots* as in *Citizen Kane* or William Wyler's *The Best Years of Lives* (1946), in which the front foreground and the farthest background are in focus simultaneously, do not occur in *Ossessione*. Instead Visconti used deep staging similar to Renoir, especially in establishing shots, but what comes too close to his camera loses focus. Deep focus does occur in Visconti's next film, *La terra trema*, and also in subsequent films like *The Leopard*. Giuseppe Rotunno, *The Leopard's* cinematographer asserts: 'The emphatic presence of three-dimensionality in Visconti's films has been an obsession of mine. Film is often flat, especially in Cinemascope. That's why for *The Leopard* I used wide-angle lenses, not quite 25 cm, in order to recover the depth of field. Everything was in fact shot in panfocus, which made me very busy with the focus during the shooting of *The Leopard*, as it had to be done subtly. Really, I had to work like a painter to create depth'.⁴⁹¹

Salt does not elaborate on Renoir's deep staging, something Kristin Thompson does in *Breaking the Glass Armor* (1988).⁴⁹² Renoir's deep staging coincided with his penchant for *long takes*, something that we see with other thirties French directors such as Marcel Carné. Salt indicates that long takes were normal in thirties European films whereas it was prominent only in two US films by John Stahl, *Imitation of Life* and *Magnificent Obsession* (both remade by Douglas Sirk in the 1950s).⁴⁹³ It was only during the forties that long takes became more common in American cinema. The European long takes of the thirties and forties 'were mostly done with fairly conventional staging of the action, and only a certain amount of camera movement'.⁴⁹⁴ When analyzing Renoir's films – and not just *La règle du jeu* – or watching early European sound films, Salt somewhat ignores their vast diversity of fluid camera movements and long takes. Russian sound films of the thirties such as *My iz Kronstadta* (*We Are From Kronstadt*, Efim Dzigan, 1936), and *Vesyolye rebyata* (*Jolly Fellows*, Grigori Alexandrov, 1934) also employed tracking shots in long take. Salt doesn't discuss the subtle long takes in early American sound films such as *Grand Hotel* (Edmund Goulding, 1932) and the Sternberg – Dietrich films such as *Shanghai Express* and *Blonde Venus*. He concludes with a fascinating chapter on Max Ophüls's use of mobile framing but, of the films that precede Ophüls, such as *Der Kongress tanzt* (Erik Charell, 1931) and *Grand Hotel*, he says very little.⁴⁹⁵ With Visconti too, we will notice that long takes coincide with deep staging and mobile framing. While the viewer's eye could still wander around in mobile space, the mobile frame steers the gaze assertively in a certain direction, making the diegetic space bigger than we would expect.

491 Interview with Giuseppe Rotunno, 20 April 2004.

492 Thompson 1988, pp. 230-43.

493 Salt 1992, p. 215.

494 *Ibid.*, p. 232.

495 Salt 1992, pp. 297-315. Remarkable is that *Drei von der Tankstelle* (1930), the first Harvey-Fritsch musical of the sound era, lacks long takes and tracking shots during the songs. Salt writes that only in 1931 did German cinema regain its fluency in cinematography from the silent era. In this context he also mentions *Ich bei Tag und du bei Nacht* by Ludwig Berger and *Kameradschaft* by Pabst. Salt 1992, p. 297.

Mobile framing with Renoir

La règle du jeu, and especially its climactic chase scenes through the rooms of the Château de La Colinière, is the oft-cited example in discussions of Renoir's mobile framing and deep staging. Renoir's camera follows the actors through the various rooms in deep shots where actions simultaneously evolve both in the fore- and background. The striking set of the chateau's interiors is un-Hollywood-like – built on one large plan.⁴⁹⁶ Kristin Thompson shows that this huge, multifunctional set was the secret of the deep staging and tracking shots for which the film has become so well known. She quotes set designer Eugène Lourié, that Renoir preferred working in the sound studio because it offered him greater control over the shoot and a reduction in the number of accidents.⁴⁹⁷ Undoubtedly Lourié made this statement in reference to the disastrous waterlogged shooting that scuttled Renoir's *Une partie de campagne* (1946, shot in 1936). *La règle du jeu*'s impressive deep staging and tracking shots were also the result of several 'dry runs' in such earlier Renoir films as *Toni* (1935), *Les bas-fonds* (1936) and *La grande illusion* (1937).

Renoir might well have learned from the mobile framing in German operetta films, Sternberg's early sound films and those of Ophüls. *La grande illusion* has a famous 360-degree camera movement but in 1934 Ophüls already made a 360-degree *whip pan* in *La signora di tutti*.⁴⁹⁸ Ophüls also let the camera run several laps while the main character walks around it in the Dutch film *Komedie om Geld* (*Comedy for Money*, 1936).⁴⁹⁹ Yet, *La règle du jeu* is striking for the way the actors and the camera rotate around each other, anticipating such films as Michelangelo Antonioni's *Cronaca di un amore* (1950). Still, Thompson rightly remarks that despite the ever-moving actors and cameras, we are still directed to the important actions or dialogue.⁵⁰⁰ At this point, Renoir switches away from the realism implicit in deep staging: 'In *Rules* the use of depth is intermittent, combining moments when concerns of realism dominate with others when narrative clarity becomes paramount and depth is de-emphasized'.⁵⁰¹ In classical film language, the camera follows the main characters and keeps them within the frame by *reframing*. In *La règle du jeu* this framing is not always sharply defined because multiple characters move around and no one person clearly dominates the frame. To quote Thompson again: 'To use the choreography metaphor, the camera becomes another dancer, moving in relation to human dancers, but with its own distinct pattern of steps'.⁵⁰² She analyzes the complicated tracking shot prior to the chase in which the camera seems uncertain over which character to follow and therefore 'butterflies' from one

496 Thompson 1988, pp. 230-43.

497 Thompson 1988, p. 232.

498 For the fluent camera movements in *La signora di tutti*, see also Antonio Costa's chapter on this film in his study *I leoni di Schneider. Percorsi intertestuali nel cinema ritrovato* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2002), pp. 143-57.

499 Ophüls was not the first. In *Der letzte Mann* (1924) Murnau put the camera on a rotating disk to depict the protagonist's drunkenness. Even Murnau was not the first: in an early Italian farce, *Kri Kri e il tango* (Cines 1913), the camera and the actors were put on a rotating disk to express dizziness, twenty years before Ophüls's whip pan. And even before this in Edwin Porter's *Dream of a Rarebit Fiend* (1906) rapid pan-tilting occurs.

500 Thompson 1988, p. 235.

501 *Ibid.*, p. 237.

502 *Ibid.*, p. 239.

to the other. This movement recalls the complicated tracking and panning shot at the start of *Grand Hotel* (see below), where the camera ‘butterflies’ from one to another character in a single take. Perhaps this is not coincidence since in both films, the characters are all equally important.

Mobile framing in *Tosca*

With regard to Visconti’s tracking shots, we can distinguish between those in *depth* (forward), in *width* (lateral, panoramic), and more *diagonally* or *curved*. We can see precedents for all three in *Tosca* (1941) that was started by Renoir in 1939 and finished by Carl Koch, based on the Victorien Sardou play and featuring off-screen music from Puccini’s homonymous opera. As assistant-director Visconti participated in selecting the sites.⁵⁰³ *Tosca* opens with two horsemen galloping through nocturnal Rome from the Palazzo Farnese (the Roman residence of the Bourbon royal family) to the Castel Sant’Angelo (the seat of the cruel Regent of Police, Baron Scarpia).⁵⁰⁴ Throughout their journey, which is dynamic both because of the action and because of the many *pans*, we are introduced to late eighteenth-century Rome, shortly before Napoleon’s conquest of Italy, conceived in the film as liberation from Austrian and Spanish rule. We see Roman statues on the Capitoline Hill which establish the film’s location, but would be an absurd trajectory for the horsemen: from the river god Tiber with Romulus and Remus, to the stairs by Michelangelo and to the statue of the Dea Roma in front of the Palazzo Senatorio. Next we see Bernini’s angels on the Ponte Sant’Angelo that brings the horsemen’s tour to an end at the castle’s exterior (walls, courtyard). As they hastily cross the fortress, we notice the forward mobile framing which would become a Visconti hallmark: the camera modestly tracks along with the two men who, seen from the back, pass through one doorway after the other until they reach the bedroom of the antagonist, Baron Scarpia (Michel Simon). At this stage we hear him only offscreen. Just like Gino in *Ossessione*’s opening sequence, we do not see him yet.⁵⁰⁵

Our first real look at Scarpia is subtly realized and similar to the end of *Der letzte Mann*, where a huge cake blocks our view of the newly minted millionaire, or the beginning of *Ossessione* in which Gino’s floppy hat and Visconti’s camera angles obstruct the view of his face. The shot in *Tosca* starts with a detail: a rice sieve above Scarpia’s head, whitening his wig. A *reverse tracking shot* is then used to unveil his face that cuts to an overall shot of Scarpia and his staff – a deferred establishing shot, so to speak, similar to the opening scene of Francis Ford Coppola’s *The Godfather* (1972). But even in the reverse tracking shot, Scarpia is not immediately visible due to the conic mask held before his face. As none of Renoir’s thirties films use this device, Visconti may have appropriated it from his work as assistant director on *Tosca*. *Tosca* demonstrates a remarkable use of *crane shots* when, for example, from the top of a scaffold at the Sant’Andrea della Valle church, the painter Mario

503 See for the pre-production and production process of this film, Blom 2011.

504 Renoir directed only these opening images, which were also the first series of shots filmed in 1940. All subsequent shots were directed by Koch. See Blom (2011).

505 It is unknown whether Koch closely followed Renoir’s shooting script after the latter left, and if this tracking shot was already planned from the beginning.



Fig. 163-168. *Tosca* (Carl Koch, Jean Renoir 1941).

Cavaradossi (Rossano Brazzi) observes the marchesa Attavanti (Carla Candiani), sister of the escaped Angelotti who is hiding in his family chapel. In one single shot the camera swirls from a high POV through the nave of the ship, explores the architecture, goes down to the marchesa and her companion praying and kneeling, rises again, and ends in an over-the-shoulder shot of Cavaradossi sketching the noblewoman. When the marchesa leaves the chapel, the camera ascends to the scaffold and shows Cavaradossi watching the two women leave. A multi-layered *crane shot* shows the Te Deum in honour of the presumed victory over Bonaparte at Marengo. We see the well-filled church from above while monks, acolytes, and



Fig. 169-172. *Tosca* (Carl Koch, Jean Renoir 1941).



Fig. 173-174. *Tosca* (Carl Koch, Jean Renoir 1941).

a priest under a canopy pass across the nave. Associations with *The Leopard* come in mind, when the Salina family walk in, under the eyes of the villagers, to another Te Deum. There too, we look down from a bird's-eye perspective onto the nave. In *Tosca*, though, the camera cranes down while the priest approaches with the Holy Eucharist. When the canopy is about to pass the camera on the right, we notice Scarpia and his men in the background moving in an opposite direction among



Fig. 175-178. *Tosca* (Carl Koch, Jean Renoir 1941).

the kneeling believers (deep staging choreography).⁵⁰⁶ After the procession passes, attention immediately shifts to Scarpia's gang standing in front of the Angelotti chapel. They search the chapel and find the marchesa's fan which Scarpia later uses to make Tosca jealous. She will lead him unknowingly to Cavaradossi and Angelotti. *Tosca's* crane shots clearly preceded (and influenced) those in *Ossessione*, such as in the opening scene when Visconti's camera moves upwards, over the truck, to reveal Gino walking towards the door of the trattoria (see below).

In addition to mobile crane shots, *Tosca* has *backward tracking shots* that make the subject part of the masses. One such shot follows after the church scene when a balloon is released from a crowded Piazza Farnese with a painted caricature of Napoleon hung on the gallows. First we see the balloon full-screen. The camera tracks back, revealing the masses applauding and cheering the balloon. The balloon ascends and the camera pan tilts to follow it. This cuts immediately to a shot of Tosca in an open carriage, entering the Palazzo Farnese's gates and also cheered by the masses; framing and editing thus combine the two events.

⁵⁰⁶ Visconti would use a same choreography of opposed movements in the opening scene of *Bellissima*, with the crowd going left towards the studio's entrance and Maddalena moving to the right, searching for her daughter and singling her out from the rest.

Koch situates two beautiful examples of *lateral tracking* inside of the Palazzo Francese. The camera follows the master of ceremonies passing groups of Italian and foreign aristocrats discussing the political situation, but when Tosca arrives for her rehearsal, politics are set aside and she is quickly surrounded by the men. Lateral tracking is repeated when Scarpia arrives and the camera follows him through the palace, first in a curved motion, then in a long lateral track to the right, passing various rooms and walls (as was common in silent cinema) until he reaches the throne room where the proud queen poses for a portrait. In short, during the shooting of *Tosca* Visconti must have had first-hand experience with various types of tracking shots, significantly more than during his internship on Renoir's *Une partie de campagne*.

Tracking in depth and in width: *Ossessione* and *La terra trema*

Already in his debut, Visconti uses two remarkable *forward tracking shots*. In *Ossessione's* opening scene, the camera is vastly mobile. After Gino descends from the truck, we get a *crane shot*. The camera tracks to the right with Bragana and the truck drivers until they reach the pump, but then it moves in a curve tracking shot and soars over the truck, enabling us to see Gino walking towards the door of the trattoria in the background. On the building's facade the words 'Ex Dogana' [former toll] and 'Trattoria' [restaurant] are visible (see Chapter 8 for the function of the door in this scene). A close-up showing the 'Trattoria' sign is then followed by a crane shot in the opposite direction, with a downwards and backwards curve, ending with Gino standing in front of the door, feeling for some pennies to buy food. When he enters, the camera shows only and tracks along with his legs while he keeps the approaching dogs at a distance. Standing at the counter, Gino is shown in medium shot from the back, his hat covering most of our view of his face. When he hears singing from the kitchen and walks to the right, the camera tracks with him in an arc, keeping his face out of sight. Standing in the kitchen doorway, he asks if he can eat here. Shown in a medium close shot, Giovanna looks at Gino's face, which is finally revealed to the viewer for the first time, similar to Scarpia's introduction in *Tosca*. First she looks at him casually as she busily puts on nail polish, but she jerks her head upwards almost immediately when she gets a good look at him. This is followed instantly by a fast, short *track forwards* on Gino's face, underlining the importance of this disclosure of his male beauty. This fast tracking in on someone's face, revealing narrative information and providing emotional emphasis, was repeated a few years later in *The Third Man* (Carol Reed, 1949), when Holly Martins (Joseph Cotton) learns that his friend Harry Lime (Orson Welles) has been killed in a car accident.

The second case is a typical example of a *following shot*. First Visconti uses a slow *forward tracking shot* on Giovanna, who waits in a bar for Gino to leave the house of the prostitute, Anita. The camera films her subtly from the outside through a half open glass door. Giovanna is playing a role: she is still seen as the decent and restrained widow despite her arranging her husband's murder. Visconti creates a delicate connection between inside and outside: a tilted mirror hangs to Giovanna's left in which passers-by are briefly reflected. She takes off her black



Fig. 179-187. *Osessione* (Luchino Visconti 1943).

mourning hat and veil, blows her nose and receives a drink before the film cuts to Gino and Anita, leaving to get food. The camera returns to Giovanna, from inside the café, showing her in medium shot, sitting at a table. The background is out of focus. Her changing expression indicates that she sees Gino coming out. The rejected and vengeful wife takes over and she forgets to keep up appearances. Under her arm Giovanna clenches a purse containing Bragana's life insurance.

Visconti then starts a long *tracking shot*, all in one *long take*. The camera first tracks her until she is shown in close up, adjacent to the camera. Giovanna stands up and walks to the back towards the café's exit. The camera follows her, at table height, though not at her pace so that she goes from *close up* to *medium shot* to *medium long shot*. Gino and Anita cross the road in the background and exit screen left. Giovanna exits the bar followed by the camera. A man sitting on the café's terrace, frame left, stands up and walks away (to facilitate the camera movement and the spectator's view). Once the camera passes the customers on the terrace, Giovanna and the street are fully visible while

Gino and Anita stand in front of an ice cream cart near a milk shop in the background. The camera stops tracking at the threshold of the café's door, so Giovanna appears in *long shot* and walks from centre plan to the background,



Fig. 188-196. *Ossessione* (Luchino Visconti 1943).

crossing the road. Because the foreground is not populated, we know whom to look for easily.

After Giovanna has crossed the street, this diegetic clarity is attenuated when several people pass through the frame. This was apparently Visconti's way of clarifying the time of Gino's milk purchase, without having to interrupt the long take and the tracking shot. Then the image becomes depopulated, allowing us to focus on Giovanna. She walks around the ice-cream cart and towards the store to have a better look at Gino. Only then does Visconti cut to a closer shot of her, standing next to the ice cream cart, and stopping Gino as soon as he comes out with Anita. A fierce quarrel arises, ending when Gino slaps Giovanna in the face: a literal and figurative painful public humiliation.

Visconti's camera movements have been meticulously documented. In *La terra trema*, each shot was painstakingly conceived and prepared. This is evident from assistant director Francesco Rosi's highly detailed notes and lists, housed in the archives of the Bibliothèque du film in Paris. In interviews, including those with Gianni Rondolino, Rosi has confirmed Visconti's thorough preparation, contradicting Visconti's insistence on improvisation during the production. Not only

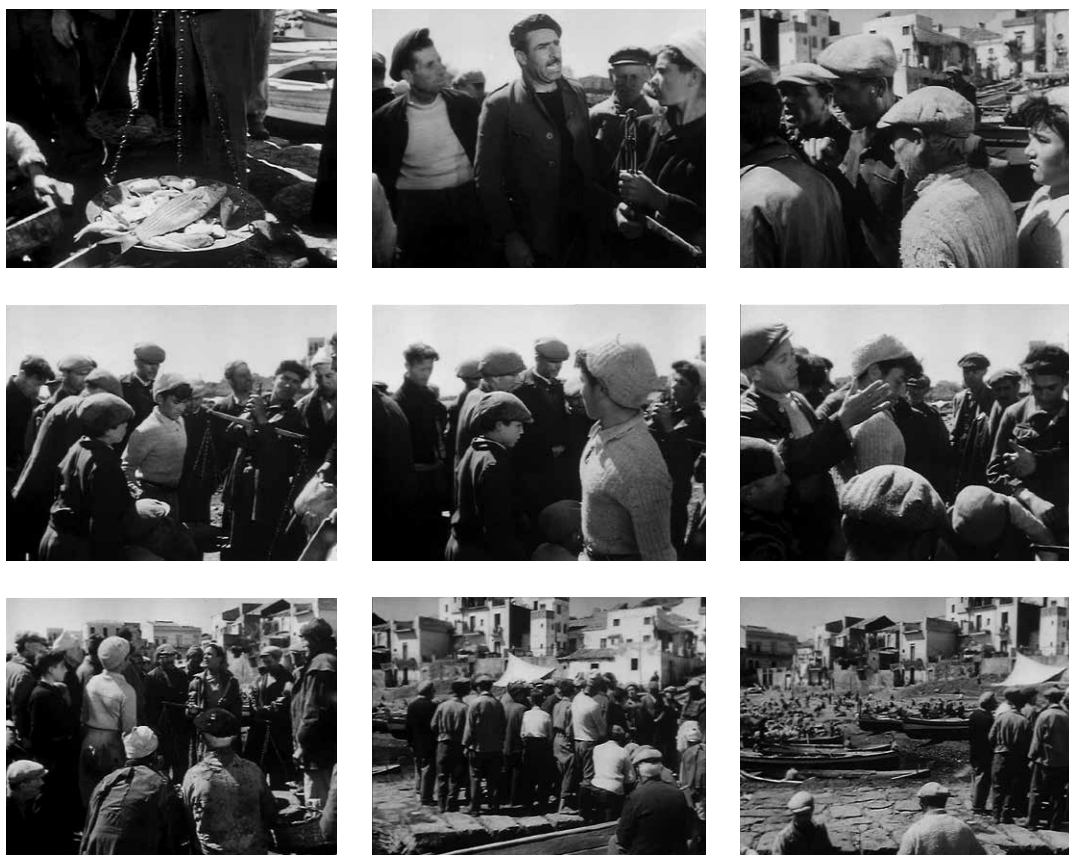


Fig. 197-205. *La terra trema* (Luchino Visconti 1948).

does Rondolino compare the film with painting⁵⁰⁷, in this case nineteenth-century Italian painting, he also compares Visconti's camera work intertextually, namely with Jean Renoir. *La terra trema* begins with a *pan* leftwards from the church to the port, following the merchant's descent to the quay where the camera dwells on the approach of the distant fishing boats. This shot is followed by another leftward pan and tilt where we see Mara walking with an oil lamp to the gate and looking outside.

Yet we should also consider the complex, lateral *tracking shot* at the fish market at the film's beginning, which starts with an emblematic image of fish on the trader's scale and continues for over two minutes of screen time. The camera ascends, scans the traders and fishermen, and starts following the passing boy, Maccarone (Ignazio Maccarone), so that we explore the entire market, the men's voices and gestures and the fishermen's dislike of the traders. All the men huddle because of

507 Visconti had originally intended *La terra trema* as a trilogy on fishermen, miners, and farmers, but only the first episode was filmed. When discussing the never-filmed third episode of the massacre of the farmers at Portella della Ginestra by Salvatore Giuliano and his gang (1947) in *La terra trema*, Rondolino 2006, p. 207, refers to the end of Bertolucci's *Novecento* (1976), to Russian revolutionary cinema, and to the painting by Giuseppe Pellizza da Volpedo (*Quarto stato*, 1901, Museo del Novecento, Milan), which functioned as opening image for *Novecento*. Francesco Rosi, assistant-director, reworked the episode in his own film *Salvatore Giuliano* (1962), and shot it in 1961 on the exact location.

the narrow quay so that Maccarone has to push and shove and the crowd often obstruct our view of him (confirming Visconti's preference for the indirect view). Moving left and right, following the boy who cannot find his friends, the camera compliments his search and exasperation. At times, the camera reveals the village above the heads of the men though the focus remains on them. Finally it curves to the left and bends and tracks backwards while the boy exits from the frame. Visconti removes us from the fish market, to emphasize the village and its church in the background.

The camera moves left of the group, enabling us to see the beach in the background where Maccarone finds 'Ntoni and his relatives. From previous shots we know that 'Ntoni and the others are sitting on the beach, mending their nets, commenting on the unjust situation. In the lower foreground fishermen are also mending their nets, functioning as human *repoussoirs* but also revealing their resilience in the face of adversity. Spatially, we have gone from shallow space to deep space. Less complicated but still fascinating are the *pan shots* during the quarrel between the young fishermen and the traders that culminates with 'Ntoni throwing the traders' scale into the sea. These shots appear to pay homage to Renoir's lateral tracking shots and pan shots in *Toni*, *Le crime de Monsieur Lange*, *Les bas-fonds*, *La grande illusion*, and *La règle du jeu*. Yet, the matrix for Visconti's mobile framing goes beyond Renoir and owes much to his work on *Tosca*.

Rosi kept four working registers. The first contains everyone's, including Visconti's, daily schedule and tasks. The second contains the bulletin: the record of all lenses to be used per shot, the focal length(s), the camera movements, the camera heights, the length of the used up negative and the annotations. The third has the shooting script, in which each shot is described and narrated. Finally, the fourth register contains the continuity (the *raccordi*).⁵⁰⁸ Every shot was storyboarded so that each could be resumed immediately in case of interruptions (e.g. bad weather). Visconti had learned from the bad weather that had plagued *Une partie de campagne's* production. The continuity described not only scenography and costumes but also

508 These registers were mentioned by Rosi himself in Francesco Rosi, 'Introduzione', in Luchino Visconti, *La terra trema* (Bologna: Cappelli Editore, 1977), pp. 11-12. See also Rondolino 2006, p. 215-16, and Bellocchio 2005, p. 56, n. 8. I have consulted the original registers at the BiFi (Bibliothèque du Film) in Paris: CT 1945, B187, F MAR 2-21 and 2-22 9 (raccordi); CJ 1946, B188, Diario 1/2/3/4. The *diari*, diaries of the production, contain a detailed report of the day to day shootings, revealing that one had to wait endlessly for raw film stock coming in from the continent. The diaries are dated: 1) 10 November-26 December 1947; 2) 27 December 1947-14 February 1948; 3) 15 February-10 April 1948; 4) 11 April-10 May 1948. In short, the crew was stuck for half a year in Sicily, while in Milan and Rome Visconti tried to get money by all possible means, selling shares and jewelry, until he finally met the Sicilian film producer Salvo d'Angelo of Universal Film and interested him for the project. D'Angelo provided additional funding via the Banco di Sicilia. The initial amount provided by the Italian Communist party (PCI), intended for a documentary to use ...in the 1948 elections, was far too small to finish Visconti's fiction film. Universal Film was a Catholic production company, founded by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico. So while *La terra trema* was commissioned by the Communist party, it was finished by their adversaries, the Catholics. Anton Giulio Mancino regards the affair as not entirely innocent. He claims that Visconti's initial plan to include an episode of the massacre at the Portella della Ginestra in May 1947 was boycotted, as this then recent event would have been too 'explosive'. Anton Giulio Mancino, *Il processo della verità. Le radici del film politico-indiziario italiano* (Torino: Kaplan, 2008), pp. 178-227, in particular pp. 187-8 and 209-14.

gestures and actions.⁵⁰⁹ In short, Visconti maintained total control, even endlessly rehearsing the fishermen's dialogues, which were often transcripts from Verga's novel *I Malavoglia* into their local dialect, and which he would change only after consulting with them. Finally, *La terra trema* also featured a striking number of *lateral* tracking shots and *pans*, unlike the tracking in *depth* in *Ossessione*.

While Bazin missed the tracking shot discussed above when analysing *La terra trema*, he *did* recognize Visconti's predilection for *long takes* and *deep staging*: 'Deep focus [*profondeur de champ*] has naturally led Visconti (as it led Welles) not only to reject montage but, in some literal sense, to reinvent a new kind of shooting script. His "shots" (if one is justified to still speak of the term) are unusually long – some lasting three or four minutes. In each, as one might expect, several actions are going on simultaneously'.⁵¹⁰

Tracking in width, between the panoramic and panning

Visconti's films not only work in *depth* through vistas or *vertically* through vertical objects in the picture (such as humans) but also in *width*. This is not only because the Academy format is horizontal and some of Visconti's movies were shot in widescreen. It recurs in compositions where horizontals dominate the image. We also see it in *lateral tracking shots*, such as the fish market at *La terra trema*'s beginning, the long lateral tracking of the supper at the ball in *The Leopard* which provides a dynamic overview of the splendour of the guests and their entourage (followed by a shot of Don Fabrizio looking for a chair and finally sitting at the Colonel's table), or the complex pan, zoom, and lateral tracking in *Death in Venice*'s hotel lobby and the lateral tracking shots on the beach, where we observe Aschenbach and the other guests and where we discover Tadzio. These shots recall the huge group portraits and panoramas of William Frith's mid-nineteenth century panoramic paintings (*Ramsgate Sands*, 1854; *Derby Day*, 1856-1858; *The Railway Station*, 1862). Visconti's are, however, group portraits and panoramas *in motion*. His camera often passes depth cues (see Chapter 7) such as flowerpots during these tracking shots.

This panoramic feeling may also be evoked in scenes *without* striking camera movement and with *few* people within the image such as in *The Leopard*'s picnic and hunting scenes and Franz's execution in *Senso*. In addition, various panoramic moments exist in *Death in Venice*: when Aschenbach aboard the *Esmeralda*, sailing into Venice, when he later sits on a boat on the beach observing the sea and the swimmers and at the end on the Lido's nearly empty beach (see also Chapter 4 and 7 for painting and photography in *Death in Venice*).

It is tempting to relate *Death in Venice*'s horizontality to a similar tendency in the Italian Macchiaioli with their recurrent panoramic seascapes and landscapes. *Death in Venice*'s beach scenes invite comparison with Giovanni Fattori's *Rotonda dei Palmieri* (1866), even though one could as well refer to those in Eugène Boudin's paintings or, to stay chronologically closer to the subject – the film is set around 1911 – to Léon Bakst's *Bathers on the Lido* (1910-1912), Isaac Israël's *Lido of Venice* (1925-1930), Moses Levy's *Spiaggia con bagnanti, Tunisi* (1920) or even

509 Rondolino 2006, p. 216.

510 Bazin, Vol. II, 2005, p. 43. See also Bordwell 1997, p. 67.



Fig. 206. *The Leopard* (Luchino Visconti 1963).



Fig. 207. *Death in Venice* (Luchino Visconti 1971).

the Visconti family photos on the beaches of Alassio and Forte dei Marmi (see also Chapter 4).⁵¹¹ The film's closing scenes on the Lido beach, when Aschenbach observes Tadzio wrapped in a large towel and the subsequent scene showing a nearly deserted beachfront, are also reminiscent of post-war works like Carlo Carrà's empty beach scene in *Spiaggia a Bocca di Magra* (1952).

The walk following the picnic in *The Leopard* recalls both Silvestro Lega's painting *I fidanzati* (1869), in which a bourgeois family quietly strolls through a garden and, even more strongly, the strolling aristocrats in Renato Castellani's debut film *Un colpo di pistola* (1942). The picnic itself evokes associations with the aristocratic picnic in 1830s Russia in *Un colpo di pistola*, but also with bourgeois gatherings in Claude Monet's *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1865-1866) and James Tissot's *The Picnic* (1876), the petit bourgeois picnic in Jean Renoir's film *Une partie de*

511 For the family photos, see D'Amico 1978, pp. 46-7, 60-1. See also chs. 4 and 8.



Fig. 208. Un colpo di pistola (Renato Castellani 1942).



Fig. 209. Silvestro Lega, I fidanzati (1869). Museo Nazionale Scienza e Tecnologia Leonardo Da Vinci, Milan.



Fig. 210. The Leopard (Luchino Visconti 1963).

campagne, and even Brassai's famous photographic counterparts of working-class picnics during the Popular Front summer of 1936.⁵¹²

Franz's execution in *Senso*, shot from a great distance (due, in part, to the unavailability of the actor Farley Granger), evokes associations with such Fattori paintings as *Soldati francesi* (1859, aka *In vedetta. Il muro bianco*), precisely because of the soldiers' anonymity as they are seen from the back (see chapter 7 on use of people's backs as repoussoir in film and painting).⁵¹³ With the Macchiaioli painters we notice the horizontal format not only in Fattori and Lega but also in Vittorio Cabianca and Michele Cammarano. In *Marmi di Carrara Marina! La partenza della parranza* (1861), Cabianca depicts two men walking towards us while a woman has turned her back to wave a ship goodbye. Gino and the Spaniard in Ancona are not so distant then (see Chapter 7). Cammarano's *Piazza San Marco* (1869) shows a large crowd in the Venetian square at nighttime. As indicated before, this painting was the starting point for *Senso*'s visual scheme, adhering more to Boito's short story, though persistent rain and Visconti's 'discovery' of Maria Callas in Verdi's *Il Trovatore* compelled him to relocate the entire opening scene to the Teatro La Fenice nearby (see Chapter 1).⁵¹⁴

Two Renoirs and the panoramic

From panoramic painting to the panoramic in cinema, in particular the mobile framing of *panning*, seems a logical progression. Curator and art critic Dominique Païni researched this development by focusing on Auguste Renoir and his son,

512 For the representation of the picnic in *The Leopard*, Roberto Campari refers not only to *Un colpo di pistola*, but also to Visconti's own youth when he visited the beach of Forte dei Marmi with his family and enjoyed similar picnics. Campari, however, doubts the latter to be a key source. Campari (1994), p. 61. The original source is a cousin of Visconti, quoted in Servadio 1982, p. 27. The picnic is, moreover, only briefly described in Lampedusa's novel, see Lampedusa 2007, pp. 35-7.

513 It is also reminiscent of the much less sober paintings by Francisco Goya and Édouard Manet, *Third May of 1808* and *The Execution of Emperor Maximilian of Mexico*, partly because of the anonymity of the soldiers. With Goya and Manet, though, perpetrators and spectators are much closer to each other, so the panoramic effect is much smaller. Rather, a cinematic comparison presents itself with Visconti's own work, namely his literal and figuratively distant, soberly filmed execution of the Fascist police chief Pietro Koch in the documentary *Giorni di gloria* (1945). Incidentally, the panoramic image in *Senso* was born of practical necessity. The execution was not initially intended to be filmed as actor Farley Granger was already back in the United States. When the production company Lux decided to film the execution, the entire scene was done with a stand in, and not in Verona, as dictated by the script, but at the Castel Sant'Angelo in Rome. As Visconti and director of photography Robert Krasker had quarreled, the Giuseppe Rotunno filmed the scene. Rotunno would remain Visconti's regular director of photography for the next ten years until *Vaghe stelle dell'Orsa*. See Farley Granger with Robert Calhoun, *Include Me Out. My Life from Goldwyn to Broadway* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2007), p. 176. Interview with Rotunno, 20 April 2004. The execution scene of *Senso* was supposed to have had a sequel in the final scene of *The Leopard*, but that other execution fell on the editing table, much to the regret of Visconti's leftist friends Rinaldo Ricci and Antonello Trombadori. Ricci was first assistant-director for *The Leopard*. Interview with Ricci, 28 April 2004. Now you only *hear* the Sicilian Garibaldi sympathizers being slain by the Piedmontese army, but initially this would also have been visible. However, production manager of *The Leopard*, Pietro Notarianni told me the scene was never shot. Interview with Notarianni, 18 May 2004.

514 Interview with Tosi, 14 April 2004. Callas performed from 23 February 1953, at the Scala. Franco Zeffirelli, quoted in Rondolino 2006, p. 312, refers to a performance of *Il Trovatore* at the Scala in the winter of 1952 as Visconti's discovery of opera as the key for his direction of *Senso*. Presumably he meant the same performance of February 1953.

Jean. In his article 'Du panorama d'Auguste aux panoramiques de Jean', (2005) Païni concludes that nature plays a limited part in the settings in Jean Renoir's films, aside from *Une partie de campagne* and *Déjeuner sur l'herbe*.⁵¹⁵ The weather plays an important role in *Une partie de campagne*, *La grande illusion* and *La règle du jeu* as well as in his American films. Regarding his father's legacy, Renoir's debut film *La fille de l'eau* (1925) recalls the paintings that Renoir père and Claude Monet made in late 1860s-early 1870s. Later *Une partie de campagne* became the 'proof' of Renoir's Impressionist influence. It is difficult not to think of Auguste's *La Promenade* (1870) while watching it. Renoir fils' fascination with water was not only typical for him but for the French Realist school of the twenties and thirties in general: landscapes as panoramas painted and put in motion by invisible hands. The characters travel through pointillist and vibrating landscapes and hang over the bridges of slow-moving barges, Païni observes. One may add that the French travelogues of the 1910s such as *Les bords de l'Yerres* (Gaumont, 1912) served as a kind of prelude to this filmic form of Impressionism.⁵¹⁶

Nonetheless, the relationship between nature and Impressionism is a persistent cliché, Païni remarks, because most of Renoir and Monet's Impressionistic paintings have *city life* as their subject. These depict the hectic pace, the crowds, and the movement of the city: *mobility* imagined. Here the painters' penchant for the urban *panorama* is strongly evident. Auguste Renoir loved paintings in which one could immerse oneself: Païni cites *Paris, le quai Malaquais* and *L'Institut, quai Malaquais* (both c. 1875), two of his panoramic paintings, which stand 180 degrees opposite each other as if the viewer had turned around. This immersive tendency is therefore accentuated. Renoir had already achieved this panoramic effect with *Le Pont des Arts* (1867). Païni praises the spatial distribution and the placement of the characters within the deep staging. He compares it with eighteenth (Bellotto, Guardi) and seventeenth centuries (Dutch) painting. *Les Champs-Élysées / The Champs-Élysées During the Paris Fair of 1867* (1867) occupies a central place in Renoir's Parisian scenes. The canvas suggests a *pan shot* (*panoramique* in French). Renoir goes beyond the classic painted panorama, however, by suggesting movement, not so much the moving mass as the painter's mobile gaze. Païni compares this to *Boudu sauvé des eaux* (1931), in which Renoir pans at the same spot when Boudu (Michel Simon) meets the bookseller, Lestinguois (Charles Granval). Because Simon physically distinguishes himself through his dancing gait, he stands out in the crowd where Lestinguois immediately recognizes him. Renoir used a kind of telephoto lens for this effect and filmed Simon from a first-floor [in the US, a second storey] window, while cars and people passed by. Seven years later, Renoir would do the same thing when filming the hunt in *La règle du jeu*.

515 Dominique Païni, 'Du panorama d'Auguste aux panoramiques de Jean', *Renoir/Renoir*, exhibition catalogue Cinémathèque française / Musée d'Orsay (Paris: Éditions de la Martinière, 2005), pp. 102-14. For the comparison between Renoir father and son, see also Olivier Curchod, 'Cinéma et peinture, septième art our artisanat: Renoir père et fils', in Jacques Aumont, ed., *Le Septième Art. Le cinéma parmi les arts* (Paris: Editions Léo Scheer, 2003), pp. 198-211.

516 Ivo Blom, "'Comme l'eau qui coule". Les films de rivières de Gaumont dans la collection Desmet', in *Images du réel. La non-fiction en France (1890-1930)*. 1895 18,(1995), p. 157-64. The film is in the Desmet Collection of EYE.



Fig. 211-213. *Toni* (Jean Renoir 1934).

The mobile camera became a Renoir trademark, especially in his sound films and, again, Rondolino has stated that Visconti's mobile camera derives from Renoir. Salt writes that during the early sound era many filmmakers avoided camera movement because of the heavy and noisy cameras, but that Renoir from *La chienne*, his first sound film, onward demonstrated this virtuosity.⁵¹⁷ In *La chienne*'s epilogue, Renoir uses a *pan shot* in which Legrand's self-portrait is driven away in a car, while Legrand himself watches the Impressionists Gallery where his work, sold by his mistress, Lulu the prostitute, is hung. Legrand, once a cashier and amateur painter, has fallen into destitution and lives on tips for keeping car doors open. Another tramp grabs his tip: the gendarme Godard (Roger Gaillard), his wife's ex-partner. Both laugh when Legrand's self-portrait is taken away by a customer. The final shot is a *backward tracking shot*, showing them looking forward to spending the tip while the camera appears to frame them in a window that turns into a theatre proscenium whose curtain closes on them. Renoir would repeat this kind of closure in *La carrozza d'oro* (1952), emphasizing the film's theatricality. As mentioned (see Chapter 8) he would repeat the backward tracking shot to end a film in *Les bas-fonds*.

Renoir's *Toni* contains many *tracking shots* and *pans*, sometimes combined with *tilts*. The film's imagery features an ellipse at the beginning and end: both feature a train arriving at a platform. Italian immigrants descend, cross the railway and walk down to the riverbank. The camera pans and tilts to the railway bridge while the immigrants sing about 'Anna Maria' whom they will never see, a reference to the murdered Italian immigrant Toni (Charles Blavette) who will never see his Spanish lover, Josefa (Celia Montalván) again.⁵¹⁸ She has shot her evil husband, Albert (Max Dalban), though Toni takes the blame and is shot while on the run. Toni's flight is captured in a long right-to-left *lateral tracking shot* when he runs across the railway bridge. This has resonances with, for example, the final scene

517 Barry Salt, 'Statistical Style Analysis of Motion Pictures', *Film Quarterly* 28, 1 (Autumn 1974), pp. 13-22. In his later work *Film Style and Technology*, Salt is rather critical of the idea of too lavish use of tracking shots in Renoir's *Tire-au-flanc* and dismisses this as a lack of professionalism. 'There have been a number of examples before and since of European film-makers learning their craft in front of the paying public'. Salt 1992, p. 185.

518 Renoir used music as a form of ironic commentary time and time again, as in *La chienne* and *La bête humaine*. Visconti also did, for example, with the opera-singing contest in *Ossessione*, with the aria of the charlatan from Donizetti's *Elisir d'amore* at the beginning of *Bellissima*, and with the aria 'Che farò senza Eurydice' from Gluck's *Orfeo* in *L'innocente*. With Renoir, though, musical commentaries are often linked to murders.

in *Les 400 coups* (*The 400 Blows*, 1959) by François Truffaut, in which the camera tracks along (*camera car shots*) Antoine Doinel (Jean-Pierre Léaud), running along a desolate beach.⁵¹⁹

Toni features a *lateral tracking shot* to the right after the prologue when the camera tracks along with an old man, Fernand (Édouard Delmont) who walks to the front door of Marie's (Jenny Hélià) house, greets her and walks inside. She follows him, the camera continues tracking and she opens a window, whose shutters were previously closed. Time has seemingly passed, because Toni, whom we just saw arrive, has been sharing Marie's bed though he has become tired of her (see Chapter 8). The scene moves in exactly the opposite direction of *Ossessione*, where Gino first demonstratively closes the shutters of the door and then has sex with Giovanna when he knows that Bragana, her husband, is gone. *Toni* does possess other similarities with *Ossessione*: Toni is also an outsider and an underdog who finally comes to a bad end. In their moments of defeat *Toni's* two female protagonists – Marie, disowned by Toni, and Josefa who shoots Albert, her husband – resemble Giovanna, especially in the scene after she has made love to Gino where she sits worn out and defeated in a corner of the room.⁵²⁰

519 This became a recurring motif, repeated in Wim Wenders's *Summer in the City*, and Jim Jarmusch's *Stranger Than Paradise*.

520 French film critic Claude Beylie asserted that already by 1934 Visconti had been assistant to Renoir during the shooting of *Toni*, a film Visconti claimed never to have seen. Beylie's claim, deduced from the producer's documents, got a life of its own, as recent publications on Visconti and Renoir such as *Visconti e il suo tempo* (2006) argue that Visconti worked as an intern for *Toni*, a claim repeated in the Eureka DVD (2006) of *Toni*. See Tullio Kezich, "Quei luchini là...". Contestualizziamo il Conte', in Caterina D'Amico de Carvalho, ed., *Luchino Visconti e il suo tempo* (Milano: Mondadori Electa 2006), p. 16. *Toni* (DVD, Eureka Video, Masters of Cinema series, 2006). See also Célia Bertin, *Jean Renoir. A Life in Pictures* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1991; originally *Jean Renoir*, Paris: Perrin, 1986), p. 110, and Stéphane Bouquet, 'Luchino Visconti', in *Renoir/Renoir* (Paris: Editions de la Martinière/Cinémathèque française, 2005), p. 230. However, no hard evidence has ever surfaced and Visconti's own words speak against it. Michèle Lagny: 'Toni was prepared between August and December 1934 and came out in February 1935. Charles Tesson, who meticulously researched the entire production and wrote three articles about it in *Cinémathèque* 1, 2 and 3 of 1992 and 1993 nowhere mentions Visconti'. Michèle Lagny to the author, 21 May 2006. Charles Tesson, 'La production de Toni. La règle et l'esprit', *Cinémathèque* 1 (May 1992), pp. 45-59; idem, *Cinémathèque* 2 (November 1992), pp. 84-97; idem, *Cinémathèque* 3 (Spring/Summer 1993), pp. 36-46. Renoir scholar Olivier Curchod confirmed this for me. Olivier Curchod to the author, 11 June 2006. Visconti's personal letters to his then fiancée, revealed after his death, illustrate that in 1934-5 Visconti was not taken yet by Renoir's left-wing political films. Peter Dragadze, 'Quel giorno Luchino mi disse', *Gente* (4 April 1976), p. 11. Incidentally, Visconti may well have *seen Toni* without having collaborated. Giuseppe Ferrara writes that Visconti saw the film in early 1936, while it was released in February 1935. Giuseppe Ferrara, *Luchino Visconti* (Paris: Editions Seghers, 1964), p. 9. See also Rondolino (2006), pp. 55-6, who suggests Visconti might have collaborated to *Toni*, but isn't sure.



Fig. 214-222. *Les bas-fonds* (Jean Renoir 1936).

Renoir's mobile camera is very evident in *Les bas-fonds*.⁵²¹ The film contains a masterly opening shot: an arcing pan shot that doubles as a POV of an unknown count who remonstrates a baron (Louis Jouvet) about his financial recklessness. We do not yet see the count, only the baron's reactions to being scolded. The camera circles around Jouvet, which makes sense given that the count is a minor character while the baron is a key protagonist. The count only appears at the end of the opening scene as a reflection in a mirror. The film then radically cuts to an *en face* of the count and the scene ends with intercut two-shots of both men.

521 The exteriors of *Les bas-fonds* were shot from 24 August until October 1936 on the banks of the Seine (between Epinay and St. Denis), the indoor scenes in the Studio Éclair in Epinay. In that period, Rondolino (2006, p. 37) writes, Visconti was back in Italy to assist in the *mise en scène* of two plays, *Carità mondana* en *Il dolce aloè*, which premiered on 20 October and 5 November 1936 – experiences of which he was much less proud than his work with Renoir as Schifano (2009, pp. 220-1) indicates. Visconti's collaboration on *Les bas-fonds* and also on *La grande illusion*, shot in the winter of 1936-7, is highly unlikely, as Rondolino (2006), pp. 57-8, confirms. Italian film critic Pio Baldelli (1982, p. 15), though, claims on the basis of a letter Visconti sent him and a testimony by Giuseppe De Santis (Visconti's assistant on *Ossessione*), that Visconti had been an assistant on *Les bas-fonds* as well. The story is untrue, Michèle Lagny proved, see Lagny 2003, pp. 84-5; also Lagny 2002, p. 29, n. 9. In the archives of Albatros, the firm that produced the film, the name of Visconti appears but it was ...

Les bas-fonds also contains a superb *lateral tracking shot* at the tavern where Pepel sits outside with a friend while his beloved Natacha remains inside with a obese man who is connected to her through her stepfather. Moving from a military band (indicating diegetic sound, just as in *Death in Venice's* lobby scene where the camera tracks away from the hotel orchestra), the camera slowly tracks to the right, past the clients on the patio, the tables, fences, shrubs, and garden statues. Midway through this tracking shot, a waiter starts to walk to the right and the camera follows him, arriving at the tent where Natacha and the man are located. The lateral tracking shot offers a lyrical panorama of a French-style beer garden.⁵²²

A similar long tracking shot occurs in *Rocco and His Brothers* when Simone and Nadia walk along the garden of a grand hotel near Lake Como filled with guests.⁵²³ They sit on a wall that separates the garden from the street until they are chased away by hotel staff. Visconti inserts a medium close-up in the middle of the scene. It seems that what follows is part of the same long take, shot with the same framing and angle: Simone and Nadia walk back in the same direction again. However, this long take is not a lateral tracking shot à la Renoir but a slight *arcing, diagonal tracking* shot that increases the sense of depth. A few years later, Visconti would make another such shot in the terrace scene at the ball in *The Leopard* when Don Fabrizio looks for a seat.

Bazin noticed that Renoir's mobile framing only became common when he started to make sound films. Bazin does not go very deep into Renoir's silent films because he feels that the filmmaker had not yet developed his style nor yet found the key to his editing. Shots follow each other without logic or dramatic *rigueur*, as he was apparently too busy directing actors. Renoir's silent movies like *Nana* and *Le Bled* contain no *pans*, while this would become the basis of his direction in his sound films. Bazin argued: 'In his subsequent work Renoir's fundamental preoccupation became the widening of the screen – already deepened by the lenses – by lateral reframing. To this end panning and lateral dollying became his two main camera techniques'.⁵²⁴ David Bordwell adds: 'Renoir seemed to have pioneered the *profondeur de champ* later exploited by Welles and Wyler. Less obviously, his freely

...that of the script girl Yvonne Visconti. Despite extensive research by investigators such as Olivier Curchod (Curchod to the author, 11 June 2006), the name of Visconti has not been found anywhere in documents relating to *Les bas-fonds* and *La grande illusion*. Visconti himself said in interviews that he had only been present during talks that preceded the shooting. Rondolino 2006, p. 58, refers to the interview with Giuseppe Ferrara in which Visconti said so (see Ferrara 1964). In an interview with Dutch film critic Ab van Ieperen in *Filmfan*, Visconti made the same observation (Ab van Ieperen, *Filmfan* 2, 3, (April 1974), pp. 23-7). Apart from this, Visconti may have well have *seen* the film afterwards, and not only in Paris, as *Les bas-fonds* was also released in Italy under the title *Verso la vita* in Spring 1940. For example, Corrado Pavolini in *Tempo* en 'Proteo' in *Oggi* praised the film. See Corrado Pavolini, 'Verso la vita', *Tempo* (25 April 1940), p. 26; Proteo, 'Verso la vita', *Oggi* (20 April 1940), p. 22. In his study *Jean Renoir* (Roma: FICC, 1952), pp. 18-19, Callisto Cosulich mentions that Alberto Lattuada excitedly wrote about the film in *Domus*, as did Enrico Emanuelli in *Primato* and Giuseppe Isani in *Cinema*. Alberto Lattuada's review was published in June 1940 in *Domus*, Isani's in his section 'Film di questi giorni' in the journal *Cinema* 93 (10 May 1940), pp. 332-3.

522 Renoir wanted to evoke an atmosphere that suggested a middle ground between Russia (the country of Gorki on whose play the film was based) and France (Renoir's country).

523 It is the former Hotel Grande Bretagne in Bellagio on Lake Como. In the film, Nadia already makes a comment that it was once an upscale hotel for British tourists, but now deteriorated. It is now abandoned and falling apart.

524 André Bazin, *Jean Renoir* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), p. 21.



Fig. 223-228. *Rocco and His Brothers* (Luchino Visconti 1960).

moving camera provided a horizontal equivalent of depth, a “lateral depth of field” that suggests a seamless world enveloping the action.⁵²⁵

Mobile framing and the exploration of space in 1930s cinema

Smooth camera movements like *lateral tracking shots* combined with *long takes* are not Renoir’s exclusive trademark, making it difficult to attribute Visconti’s camera style solely to him. Josef von Sternberg used a similar lateral tracking in a crowded location in *Shanghai Express*, at the film’s beginning. In short tracking shots and pan shots, the three female protagonists are introduced: the rich Chinese prostitute Fei Huen (Anna May Wong), the prissy old Mrs. Haggerty (Louise Hale) with her dog tucked into her basket, and Shanghai Lily (Marlene Dietrich). After a less impressive introduction of the male protagonists, a dynamic *lateral tracking shot* follows to the left. It is a long take over the entire train platform and lasts more than thirty seconds. The camera tracks along with the station master walking towards the train. Along the way we pass a gun, a large group of soldiers on the

⁵²⁵ Bordwell 1997, p. 67.

train and, on the platform, vendors selling umbrellas, luggage carts and people passing by in the opposite direction that augments the shot's dynamics. Eventually the station master climbs into the train halfway, issues a letter, and gives orders.

Von Sternberg creates a similar tracking shot in *Blonde Venus* when Dietrich sings 'You Little So-and-So' and the camera films her while she passes by a series of palm trees in one long take (see Chapter 7). Later, when she sings 'I Couldn't Be Annoyed', a crane follows her, approaching and then distancing itself from her. The take is interrupted by brief, closer shots with Cary Grant, after which the long take with the crane resumes – just as in the above example from *Rocco and His Brothers*.⁵²⁶ Visconti may have also been influenced by such early European sound films as Charell's *Der Kongress tanzt*. The scene where Lilian Harvey sings 'Das gibt's nur einmal' was recorded in just a few extremely long takes with *lateral camera* movement.⁵²⁷ Harvey's carriage is followed by a *tracking* and *panning* camera from her shop, through the city and countryside, to the Tsar's villa while everyone cheers her on. In early European sound films, and especially in opera and operetta films, it was customary to show these arias through long takes. The lateral tracking shots in the opening scene of Alexandrov's *Vesyolye rebyata* fit into this tradition. As with Charell, the singing shepherd Kostya (Leonid Utyosov) crosses rural areas, while people – and animals – follow him as though he were the Pied Piper. The rest of the audience watches and applauds the hero, as they did for Harvey in *Der Kongress tanzt*.

Visconti does not use mobile framing in festive scenes because of his more nuanced approach to character and situation: there are no unambiguous heroes or moments of unalloyed success. The only example that comes close is the episode *Anna* in *Siamo donne* (1953), in which Anna (Anna Magnani) argues to the police that her dog is a lap dog and that she does not have to pay an additional taxi fare for it. Smiled upon by all *carabinieri* at the police station, she descends the stairs like a queen, thanking everyone and saying goodbye. Again, the camera tracks backwards until Magnani reaches the ground floor, then stops and swings along as she walks away to the taxi, before briefly returning to say goodbye to a police officer. With the taxi issue resolved, Magnani sings an ode to Rome, in a vaudeville performance, for the grand finale. As opposed to the classic backward tracking shot at the end of many films (see below), Visconti does a *track forward*: the camera comes closer until Magnani's face is in close up. Only at the end do we see her from behind when she finishes and bows to an audience – standing in for us, the film's spectators – who offer the diva an appropriate response to her performance. The curtain falls and Magnani walks away, suggesting the whole movie was a stage play just as in Renoir's *La chienne* and *La carrozza d'oro*.

We find mobile framing in early American sound cinema such as the opening lobby scene of Goulding's *Grand Hotel*, which, like *Der Kongress tanzt*, was screened at the first Venice Film Festival of 1932. After a few characters are introduced, all sitting on the phone, we cut to a dazzling, kaleidoscopic shot from above, and

526 In Dietrich's earlier films like *Der blaue Engel* and *Morocco*, the songs were not yet included in long takes.

527 The first of these is a tracking shot of 2.33 minutes, crossing the studio version of the city of Vienna. The whole scene of the voyage visualising the singing of the song takes 4.40 minutes.

then see the most important characters in the lobby from a high angle. The camera swivels from one character to another using *following shots*, staying briefly before flying up to the next character and then another and another: a kind of visual Schnitzler. The actors' movements put the camera into motion. This Reigen-like camera movement concludes with a secretary (Joan Crawford) who is tracked from the hotel's revolving door through the desk to the elevator. Such a 'democratic' treatment in which all characters seem equally important is comparable to Renoir's wandering camera in *La règle du jeu* which refuses to concentrate on one or two main characters.⁵²⁸ Visconti uses this more 'democratic' and pluriform movement in only two films, *La terra trema* and *The Damned*, in the latter of which the camera wanders in the music room during a concert, passing over all the listening family members. Soon after, as if during a relay race, the camera traces the family's power dynamics, constantly shifting from the grandfather Joachim to his son Konstantin, from Konstantin to Sophie and her lover Friedrich, and from these two to Martin. While *Rocco and His Brothers* was organized in five chapters named after each brother, the Rocco-Simone-Nadia triangle dominates. Similarly, in *The Leopard* not all family members are treated equally. Some relatives are extras, have no dialogue and are hardly introduced. Here the triangle consists of Don Fabrizio, Tancredi, and Angelica. This explains why such Schnitzler-like camera movements are almost absent in Visconti.⁵²⁹

A common figure of film language is the introductory tracking shot on a character, not necessarily a protagonist, who traverses all kinds of spaces, like Gino in *Ossessione*, in order to show the setting and to provide a dynamic introduction to the film's diegetic space. At the beginning of Murnau's *Der letzte Mann* we get a first look at the dynamics of the lobby of a grand hotel before we come to the main character. Almost like the reverse of *Grand Hotel's* opening scene, we descend the elevator down to the lobby, step out, pass through the crowd and arrive at the exit doors. Only then does the main character enter the picture. Murnau thus immediately provides a dynamic impression of the diegetic environment, that is, the world of the grand hotel (see Chapter 7 for the use of bars to stage depth). At the opening of Ophüls's *La signora di tutti*, after a discussion between the star's agent, Gaby, and a studio executive, various people (a director and production assistants) search for her in several rooms in the studio. The camera *laterally tracks* with them, passing several extras, objects and spaces, like the makeup department and the studio commissary. As with Murnau, we get an idea of the film world even before the protagonist is introduced. Ophüls later repeats the same principle during a party at the luxurious home of Nanni. From the balcony, the son Roberto has observed Gaby, a wallflower. In one smooth arcing *crane shot* the camera descends with him, while he greets friends and shakes their hands. The camera places Roberto as an individual amidst the crowd, but also indicates that he is the center of attention. After Roberto asks Gaby to dance, the camera literally dances

528 Thompson 1988, pp. 239-41.

529 Only the battle scenes in Palermo in *The Leopard* are treated in a 'democratising' way, making Tancredi just as important as all the others present, de-emphasising him as hero. This is enforced by a lack of close ups of him. See Charles Tashiro, *Pretty Pictures: Production Design and the History Film* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), p. 89.



Fig. 229-234. *The Song of Songs* (Rouben Mamoulian 1933).

with them, between the other pairs who clearly function as *repoussoir*, and follows them when Nanni guides Gaby into a separate room. Through a *whip pan* [a very fast pan motion] it is clear that she has become dizzy from dancing.⁵³⁰

Long, scanning takes that reveal the filmic environment before introducing the protagonist are also noticeable in Marlene Dietrich's films. In *The Song of Songs* (Rouben Mamoulian, 1933) the initially unrefined Lily (Dietrich) becomes a sophisticated, worldly-wise lady. A key scene takes place in a large restaurant-cum-dance hall in the Vienna of the Belle Époque. The camera first films a chic young woman (a prostitute?) with a huge hat, sitting at a bar next to an elderly man. Then it rises by way of a crane to film from a high angle, clearly focused on

530 At the 1934 edition of the Venice film festival *La signora di tutti* was awarded the best Italian film.

the reflection in the mirrored wall behind the bar. The camera then turns towards the dance floor where couples are dancing, surrounded by customers seated at tables. The crane lowers and focuses on one specific table, where sits a woman with a huge feathered hat. Like the cone in front of Scarpia's face in *Tosca* and Gino's hat in *Ossessione*, the hat obstructs the face of the wearer until the last moment. Only when someone starts to speak to her, does Dietrich turn her head to reveal a bright, glamorous Lily, who performs her wordliness by blowing cigarette smoke and proudly watching the others (and us). She has love put aside and seeks only pleasure, just as in *Blonde Venus*. Also like *Blonde Venus*, she sings to glorify her new status as a mundane entertainer, challenging her former lover, the sculptor Richard Waldow (Brian Aherne), who rejected her love and stepped back so that his wealthy client could marry her.⁵³¹

This kind of mobile camera returns in early thirties Italian film. Even in the first Italian sound feature, *La canzone dell'amore*, the camera, after showing a series of panoramic images of Rome at the beginning, tracks sideways from left to right along a seated audience who listen to a singer and a pianist. The camera then tracks backwards so that the singer, Enrico, and his girlfriend, Lucia, come into the picture. The camera movement and the presentation of the audience recall Renoir's mobile framing in *Les bas-fonds* though it predates it by six years. Later Lucia is shown as a saleswoman in a huge record store. She walks away from us down a grand staircase and comes into the store's atrium where we get an overview of the space. The camera pans to the right and tracks backwards, similar to Ophüls's mobile framing in *La signora di tutti*, though here the camera does not descend simultaneously with the tracking.

In another thirties Italian film, Alessandrini's *Cavalleria*, the camera tracks with the viewers of a classical music concert who are either watching attentively, bored or sleeping in their chairs. The camera ends up at the settees of the hostess and her friend, the protagonist Speranza (Elisa Cegani). When her ex-boyfriend Umberto (Amedeo Nazzari) enters and whispers to her, the others snigger.⁵³² The scene recalls the concert scenes in Visconti's *L'innocente*, where some spectators watch in boredom and gently gossip about Giuliana, who also sits next to the hostess, and is dumped by her husband before the eyes of all present. Here, however, Visconti's camera hardly moves, the motion being provided by the actors and the editing. In this respect, the scene in *Cavalleria* has more similarity with the tracking shots, combined with *zoom* and *pan*, in the hotel lobby of *Death in Venice*, equally departing from the orchestra and showing the audience reactions ranging from joy to boredom to plain lack of interest.⁵³³

531 Dietrich sings 'Johnny, When Will Your Birthday Be?' Her lavish outfit was designed by Travis Banton who designed her film costumes for years.

532 The last scene closes with a whip pan from the flowers in the room to the flowers at the stand on Piazza di Spagna, as described in Chapter 7.

533 We know from the beginning where the (diegetic) sound comes from, just like in the lobby scene in *Death in Venice*. Fellini would turn this around in *Otto e mezzo* (1963). Here we first hear the spa's orchestra before seeing them. Only then one realizes we are dealing with diegetic music. Michel Chion has called this lack of clarity over the source of the music 'acousmatic'. Michel Chion, *Audio-vision: sound on screen* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).



Fig. 235-238. *Cavalleria* (Goffredo Alessandrini 1936).



Fig. 239-244. *Vesolye rebyata* (Grigori Alexandrov 1934).

Three popular Russian films from the spring and summer of 1936, when Visconti was working with Renoir and seeing Russian films in Paris, contain remarkable tracking shots: *My iz Kronstadt*, *Vesyolye rebyata* and *Yunost Maksima* (*The Youth of Maxim*, Leonid Trauberg, Grigori Kozintsev, 1935). The first is remarkable for its action scenes and its frequent tracking shots, for example, along the front lines and past soldiers sleeping in an aristocratic villa. *Yunost Maksima* includes an opening scene with flashy shots filmed from speeding sleighs.⁵³⁴ In addition to the aforementioned opening scene's tracking shots, *Vesyolye rebyata* contains a beach scene where a huge long *lateral tracking shot* is used. In this scene, the young, pretentious socialite, Yelena, is searching for a famous violinist and conductor, accidentally mistaking Kostya, a shepherd, for him, the first of an escalating series of mishaps. While we follow her from left to right on the beach, the camera passes by a range of bathers as well as two photographers, who act as human *repoussoirs*. Body parts such as buttocks, legs, and feet filter and even block our view on Yelena. Despite Alexandrov's mockery of the seaside, his lateral tracking shots recall Renoir's terrace scene in *Les bas-fonds* and Visconti's shot on the Lido in *Death in Venice*. It is hardly surprising, then, that Renoir's tracking shots in *Les bas-fonds*, which he filmed late in 1936, not only hark back to his own prior experience but also to the Russian films appearing in Paris that year.

Vesyolye rebyata ends with a special camera movement: the *backward track out*, but not outside as in *Les bas-fonds* (see Chapter 8). The film closes at the Bolshoi Theatre with a sort of grand finale as seen in revue shows or the kind of apotheosis found in the classic Méliès *féerie*. The narrative has finished and only spectacle remains. The camera starts with the two main characters, Kostya and Anyuta, who move towards the camera from the stage (*direct address* is not shunned in this film). The camera slowly tracks back, showing the packed stage with all the singers and musicians, and the typical stage curtain in the background. The camera continues backtracking and passes spectators applauding from a balcony, confirming the performance's success. The balcony curtains work as frames within frames. The camera recedes even further, past the balcony doors (new frames), a corridor where a chandelier hangs, through a kind of keyhole and so towards the outside, where we see the illuminated theatre (in a scale model). This end is reminiscent of the end of Renoir's later *La carrozza d'oro* where the camera tracks backwards and, through the use of passing curtains as *repoussoirs*, we come to see the film as a stage play.

As in much of Renoir, Alexandrov's movie forces the viewer to question the relationship between theatre and cinema: whether we are at a stage performance or a filmed representation, all the world's a stage and we say goodbye to diegesis. The scene also attempts to invoke the same response from the film's audience that is shown for the stage performance: the audience *within* the film works as a stand-in for the intended reaction outside of the film, similar to the concept of *exhortatio* discussed in classical painting (see Chapter 7). Wild chases and absurdist humour refer to silent French film farces (animals that break down the house, cows in bed, drunk pigs, brawls) and the French avant-garde (the merry band behind a hearse recalls René Clair's *Entr'acte* (1924)) and provide an intertextual layer. The obvious

534 The camera work is otherwise quite modest in the remainder of the film, apart from some reframing of the actors. More effort went into innovative and contrapuntal use of sound.

studio work (*rear projection, superimposition, and empty backgrounds with close ups and medium close ups*) makes the film theatrical and non-realistic. In this respect the film shares elements with Visconti's episode in *Siamo donne* (the mixing of stage and screen) though definitely less realist.

Backward and forward tracking with Visconti

The *backward track*, like the longshot, has become an established device to close a film: it distances the audience from the world of the story. Visconti makes full use of the code of the final long shot, in which the main character is often seen walking away into the background, in *White Nights*, *The Leopard*, and *L'innocente* (defeated and not walking hopefully towards the future as in Chaplin's *Modern Times*, see Chapter 8). The backward track as a form of closure, however, is rare in Visconti. What we do see is backward tracking (or backward zoom in his sixties and seventies films)⁵³⁵ with the camera beginning with a close-up on a detail and slowly tracking back until it has created an establishing shot. The picnic in *The Leopard* can serve as a good example. The camera starts from a close shot of a big white sheet that contrasts markedly with the previous nighttime scene set in an inn, not only for its contrast of light versus dark but also its disparate negative versus positive atmosphere. The camera then tracks back until we see the steward's helpers spreading the sheet, at whose place Don Fabrizio's family is having lunch. Visconti often used backward tracking as a motif in his later films. *The Damned* begins with a hand placing a name card on an opulent dining table. The camera zooms out and we see the staff preparing the table for an important occasion, the birthday dinner of the family patriarch, Joachim von Essenbeck. *L'innocente* similarly opens with an image of blue gas lamps.⁵³⁶ The camera zooms out and shows men practicing at a fencing school where the protagonist enters. Already in *Ossessione* there was the memorable track-back in the kitchen, with Giovanna surrounded by endless piles of dirty plates, glasses, bottles and pans, and immersed, even trapped, in her surroundings.⁵³⁷ The move from close-up to full shot in opening scenes was already well known by the 1930s in Anatole Litvak's *Mayerling* (1936) and Renoir's *La grande illusion*.

535 On the use of zoom in Visconti's later films, see Stéphane Delorme, 'Pour un observateur lointain', in Bax (2004), pp. 38-40. Delorme is very critical of Visconti's zoom in *The Damned*, claiming it 'televizes' the film and transforms Big History in the little history of soap operas, thereby deliberately destroying its aura.

536 Under the opening credits, the film shows an even closer image, namely that of an old man's hand browsing through an original edition of the novel *L'innocente*. It was Visconti's own hand. See also Chapter 6.

537 Campari compares the scene to work of the painter Renato Guttuso, who, sideways, was involved in the making of *Ossessione*. Campari (1994), p. 53. More recently and more in detail, Lara Pucci compared *Ossessione* with Guttuso's *Still Life* series, remarking that both used covert anti-Fascist comments within a domestic context. See Lara Pucci, 'Fighting Fascism in the Kitchen: The Domestic Context in Visconti's *Ossessione* and Guttuso's *Still Life Series*', *Immediations* 1, 3 (2006); idem, 'History, Myth, and the Everyday: Luchino Visconti, Renato Guttuso, and the Fishing Communities of the Italian South', *Oxford Art Journal* 36, 3 (2013) pp. 417-36. Already for Visconti's article 'Tradizione e invenzione', Guttuso made a series drawings based on Verga's *I Malavoglia*, which could be seen as precurring *La terra trema*. See also Raffaele De Berti, 'Per un nuovo stile cinematografico italiano', in Silvia Bignami, ed., *Aria d'Italia di Daria Guarnati: L'arte della rivista intorno al 1940* (Milan: Skira, 2008), pp. 38-48.



Fig. 245-246. *The Leopard* (Luchino Visconti 1963).

In other scenes, rather than tracking backwards, Visconti uses *mobile space* by having the actor exit towards the back of the image, as in Tancredi's farewell before heading off to war in *The Leopard*. The camera first pans with Tancredi to the left when, after saying 'adieu' to his bashful cousin Concetta, he jumps into his buggy with his footman posted behind him. The camera swings further left to show the driveway where Tancredi's buggy heads into the background. After shots of the family on the balcony (seen from below) and of Concetta (POV of the Prince from above), with the departing coach again but now from above (the family's POV).

Forward tracking shots also recur in Visconti's films, as already shown in *Ossessione*, but also in *The Leopard's* exquisite opening scene. Visconti's camera itself scans the environment rather than using a POV shot from a specific character. Under the opening credits, the first shot shows a bright sky with a single cloud, but the second has the camera tracking in a curve to the right while overhanging branches function as *repoussoirs* (see also Chapter 7). The camera simultaneously pans slightly to the left and rises so that, as we approach the villa's entrance gate, the Salina's house comes into view in the background as beautifully as possible, between the *repoussoir* of a branch on screen left and the gate with its stone columns at centre plane. In the back, the villa's façade is clearly recognizable (right of centre). Barren high mountains, which act as a backdrop, are visible in the deep background. The



Fig. 247-252. *The Leopard* (Luchino Visconti 1963).

camera movement could be defined as a kind of elaborated *Cabiria curve*, i.e. a tracking shot that deliberately curves to emphasize the three-dimensionality and scale of the area.⁵³⁸ The next shot pans right and glides upwards from the estate's bushes (again a crane shot) and ends at a battered old bust which acts as *repoussoir* within the image. After a static shot of a second bust without a nose, filmed in low angle against a blue sky, the camera tracks again, moves upwards from the bushes to the right, and stops at an image of the villa in the background without any *repoussoir*. In the following high-angle (static) shot, the driveway is clearly visible with the villa in the rear and a bust functioning as *repoussoir* in the right front. A low-angle shot of the villa follows with a statue on the left as *repoussoir*. The camera then moves forward along the driveway to the villa. The statue is overtaken, as are the bushes next to the driveway, enforcing the three-dimensionality and the composition of the locale. Slowly the camera rises in a crane shot, providing an excellent view on the façade while obviating the familiar photographic problem of making the building appear to lean backwards. Additionally, the wind's effect on the bushes and trees ensure that the images appear cinematic and not too static or photographic. After a brief front-view shot of the top of the villa, the opening titles close with a shot from the terrace onto the villa's first floor. Increasingly, the

538 Elena Dagrada, André Gaudreault, Tom Gunning, 'Lo spazio mobile del montaggio e del carrello in Cabiria', in *Cabiria e il suo tempo* (Milano: Il Castoro, 1998), pp. 151-83; reissued as 'Regard oblique, bifurcation et ricochet, ou de l'inquiétante étrangeté du carrello', *Cinéma* 10, 2-3 (Spring 2000), pp. 207-23.

billowing curtains and canopies over the windows make their mark (on the use of curtains in *The Leopard*, see Chapter 7).

Despite the villa's massiveness, and the lack of evident human activity, the environment remains one of movement. Visconti creates an exciting variation on the introduction of Charles Foster Kane's palatial residence in the opening scene of *Citizen Kane*. Welles has the camera approach the house in a visually striking way: placing in each successive shot the light from Kane's bedroom at the same point in the image, and using dissolves between shots. Visconti does not use such an extreme focal point, though the villa always remains the focus in successive shots. Yet, he takes more screen time than Welles to establish the setting and uses more three-dimensionality through the use of mobile framing and mobile space while drawing near the Salina's villa.

Senso's war scenes are probably Visconti's most complicated tracking shots as they are combined with mobile space. Standard practice usually involves filmmakers staging their most complicated shots early in production, as was the case here. Visconti first shot the scenes of the battle at Custoza. At the medieval Ponte Visconteo, near the village of Borghetto sul Mincio, Visconti beautifully choreographed the opposing armies' different movements.⁵³⁹ From top left to bottom right, Visconti frames a procession of ambulances (horse and cart) and foot soldiers driving over the bridge. Once a second ambulance passes, the camera begins to track to the right because Ussoni's tilbury emerges from behind the cart. The camera tracks with the tilbury, both overtaking several other carts, increasing the three-dimensional feel. Just before the tilbury passes a third ambulance, the latter turns to reveal nurses in nun's habits with large white caps sitting inside. The tilbury and the camera then slow down and Visconti quickly shows us why. In the background an officer on horseback violently shouts at and gestures to a farmer who responds in kind, behind him a bullock cart loaded with hay, a dog, and people move in the opposite direction of the troops, blocking their way. The contrast is clear: armies make war, farmers have other priorities.

Visconti next uses a reverse shot aimed straight at the front of the bridge. Ussoni's tilbury is barely visible among the harvest carts in center plan. The Valeggio sul Mincio hill is visible with the medieval Castello Scaligero on it, in the background. Hussars on horseback come from right, behind the camera, race into the image, and ride towards the back while lancers on horseback ride into the image immediately afterwards. The camera slowly tracks left and positions itself in low angle to the left of the road. Farmers enter the image from left, run to the haycarts, and climb on them. Finally, gunners on horseback enter down right and hurtle past. The two shots, extremely dynamic and sophisticated in their *mise en scène*, contrast with later battle scenes where soldiers approach the enemy calmly with their bayonets at the ready, while enemy infantrymen descend from a hilltop in the background. The camera quietly tracks with the men to the right, passing a birch tree which functions as a depth cue. The soldiers walk in tight formation between sheaves of rigid cornstalks. Once in the cornfield, they fall down to shoot

539 Not only on the Ponte Visconteo but also in the town of Borghetto itself, Visconti created several shots with the military, such as in the courtyard with the generals, that opens the scene, the wooden bridge over which cavalry and infantry move, and the adjacent butcher shop in the open air.



Fig. 253-260. *Senso* (Luchino Visconti 1954).

at the Austrians. Suddenly, however, Italian soldiers on foot and on horseback storm from offscreen right over a transversal situated road. Closely behind them, Ussoni's tilbury races from right to left through the fray of the battle.

Piero Tosi recalls: 'It was an enormous task, all electric wires and poles that were not allowed to come into the picture, tragedies because the Count [Visconti] wanted to remove electricity. The first day was the Ponte Visconteo, which can also be seen in a painting by Fattori [unknown which one]. The artillery, the infantry, in the middle of the farmers' haycarts all going over the bridge, farmers on top of the carts, and underneath passed the cavalry, in short, one endless mass. Thus, the whole operation was a complete moving theatre. It is true that Girotti fell off his horse during the first shoot, the work was interrupted and he was taken to the hospital. A series of setbacks followed. And on the third day we had the sheaves from where the *bersaglieri* emerged.⁵⁴⁰ That was a huge shot, with an enormous tracking shot, and it was also tested tremendously. Far away at Santa Lucia we exploded the first bomb, a gun shot BOOM and suddenly from behind all the sheaves the *bersaglieri* appeared. The tracking shot continued and from the hill you saw the Austrians descend. Then the camera went to the road where you saw the first clashes between the *bersaglieri* and the Austrian infantry. Then Girotti's buggy passed. [When] the camera followed the buggy, you came to another area where a field kitchen was installed, then the buggy descended to a farm where a hospital with nurses was located, where white goods were dried, the farmer carts... Anyway, it was an endless panorama. I remember that it was emotional for Gino Brosio to see that whole theatre before his eyes. Gino Brosio, the setdresser, was a highly cultivated man from Turin, who had collaborated on films from the Fascist era like *Piccolo mondo antico* and *Malombra* by Soldati. Well, this stern Torinese old gentleman was crying during that take, because it was really a floating theatre'.⁵⁴¹

Yet, Visconti rarely uses the familiar trope of forward tracking shots from the mass towards the individual. The beginning of *Bellissima* shows a somewhat lateral movement, where the masses storm towards the left into the film studio while Maddalena Cecconi, the protagonist, goes in the opposite direction to find her child, a movement that sets her apart and singles her out. As with Murnau and Ophüls, however, Visconti first makes the viewer appreciate the setting in great detail before focusing on the characters – thus the centrality of foregrounding settings in many of his films. In *Ossessione*, Gino's face is not immediately shown because we discover the inn-cum-trattoria with him. *Senso* also takes time to show – in slow pans and camera movement – La Fenice and its visitors before introducing Livia Serpieri. For the same reasons, Visconti gradually shows us first the estate and the villa in *The Leopard*, and only then its inhabitants, before making it clear that Don Fabrizio is the main character. We have also encountered Visconti's scanning

540 During the Risorgimento, the *bersaglieri* were a typical light infantry corps, recognisable for their wide brimmed hats. They operated as skirmishers, intended to operate in slow-moving line and column formations but also operating as shock troops when necessary.

541 Interview with Tosi, 14 April 2004. He suggests this scene of Ussoni's journey through the turmoil of war is one continuous long take, but that is clearly not the case. I have not been able to figure out the painting by Fattori mentioned by Tosi. Fattori's painting of the battle of Custoza (*Battaglia di Custoza*, 1880, Rome, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna) for certain does not show the famous medieval bridge. Fattori's work and Visconti's familiarity with it is discussed in Chapter 1.

through tracking shots in the aforementioned shots in *La terra trema*'s fish market and the supper in *The Leopard*. In the latter, the camera scans the rooms of the villa along with Angelica and Tancredi while they go from room to room until they finally arrive at the grand ballroom. Earlier, they had explored, along with the viewer, Don Fabrizio's attics. All these examples confirm Visconti's attachment to location, to setting, and to architecture as not only the background but also the characters' and the narrative's *Seelenlandschaft* [landscapes of the soul].

Visual explorations

Visconti's exploration of space is quite striking: often without an establishing shot but rather bit by bit, just as his main characters do. This way the viewer discovers new vistas, either because doors open and new spaces arise or because the camera wanders around with or without the characters. This recalls the *visual explorations* of Gino's arrival at the trattoria and his meeting with Giovanna in *Ossessione* and the wanderings of Tancredi and Angelica in *The Leopard*, as well as Livia and Franz's nightly strolls through Venice in *Senso*, Sophia's search for her son in the attic in *The Damned*, Aschenbach's pursuit of Tadzio in *Death in Venice* and the Empress Elisabeth's visits to the castles of Linderhof, Herrenchiemsee, and Neuschwanstein in *Ludwig*.

Visconti's use of clothing is a special form of visual exploration. In *L'innocente*, he turns Giuliana Hermil's shoes, dress, underwear, and corset into a kind of erotic journey that leads to her being nude in bed with Tullio, their bodies first filtered through semitransparent curtains and then, following a brief cut to a billowing curtain, openly displayed. As in Derrida's conception of the trajectory, the voyage seems as important as the destination (see Introduction and Chapter 1). This camera movement has become a topos in film language. Visconti was possibly inspired by the paintings *Natura morta* (1882) by Giuseppe De Nittis and *Rolla* (1878) by Henri Gervex and the opening scene in Max Ophüls's *Madame de...* (1953).⁵⁴² It is more likely, however, that he appropriated and visualized lines from the D'Annunzio novel. D'Annunzio, in fact, describes such a visual exploration of garments, albeit at a later point in the story, when Tullio spies upon his wife: 'On looking around me distractedly, I discovered on the carpet the slender and polished shoes, on the back of a chair the long ash-colored silken hose, the satin garters, another object of secret elegance, all things that my lover's eyes had already delighted in'.⁵⁴³ This takes place in the film when Tullio has fallen in love with

542 The painting *Natura morta* (1882, Pinacoteca De Nittis, Barletta) by Giuseppe De Nittis has a similar display of garments. In *Rolla* (1878, Musée d'Orsay, Paris) a man stands at an open window and looks back at his mistress (a prostitute?) asleep and naked, clearly after passionate lovemaking. A vector could be traced going from the dress on the ground, via the corset on a chair, and the jewelry on a little table, towards the female nude, almost fully displayed to the man, and to the viewer. The painting caused a popular scandal at the time when it was refused at the 1878 Salon but was still exhibited elsewhere. A beautiful cinematic version is the opening scene of *Madame de ...* (1953) by Max Ophüls. Here we see only the hand of actress Danielle Darrieux passing jewels and clothes, because she wants to sell some of them. The camera follows her hand and arm. We thus learn that the main character is a wealthy lady, considering her rich wardrobes and caskets. Gradually we see more and more of her from the back, but only when she puts on a little hat in front of a mirror and lowers her veil before her face. The reflection shows her face for the first time, analogous to the delayed introductions in *Tosca* and *Ossessione*.

543 D'Annunzio 2009, p. 104.

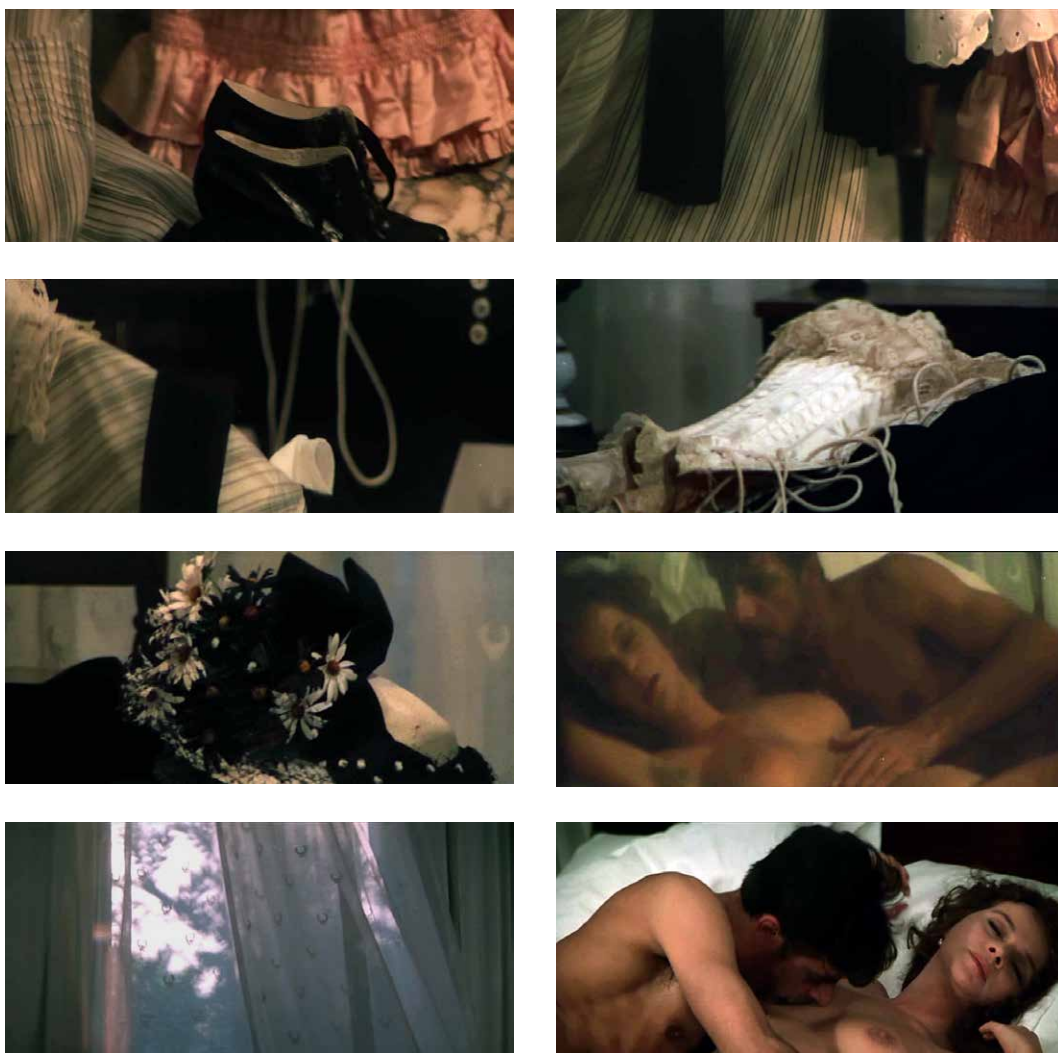


Fig. 261-268. *L'innocente* (Luchino Visconti 1976).

his wife again because she has a secret lover. He takes her to the country house of their honeymoon and makes love to her, not knowing that she is pregnant with her lover's child.

Visconti had already filmed such visual explorations before in *The Damned*. After Martin has defied his proud and frigid mother, Sophie, and has brought her literally to her knees, he drugs himself, and rapes her. In a long take after the incestuous rape scene, we see Sophie's hands scanning objects from Martin's youth: a little baret with ribbons, a school notebook, and a lock of hair that she caresses and compares with her own. She looks aside in despair: her own flesh and blood has become a monster. The lock of hair is therefore an object that encapsulates both memory and a fearful intimation of the future.

The Damned's scene with Martin's lock of hair is similar to one in *Malombra* (1916) by Carmine Gallone, an adaptation of the classic novel by Antonio Fogazzaro albeit with a different outcome. Here Marina di Malombra (Lyda Borelli) accidentally finds a journal, a mirror, a lock of hair and a pair of gloves. Through reading the diary, but also because of the lock, Marina has an attack of hysteria, imagining that she is the reincarnation of her unfortunate distant cousin Cecilia, as both have the same blond hair.⁵⁴⁴ The use of the lock as a psychological catalyst is more striking than in the later one by Mario Soldati (1941). In this *Malombra*, the lock is but one of the objects Marina (Isa Miranda) finds, which include Cecilia's writings, the gloves, and a brooch that is not in Gallone's version (while the mirror is absent in the sound version). Marina compares the hair with her own, pressing her own against her cheek. However, in the Soldati film, the hair does not produce a psychological crisis in Marina. With Soldati, the crisis occurs when Marina overhears her uncle and the songs of rowing fishermen, just as it is described in Cecilia's letter (no diary here). It is not a visual object but *sound*, therefore, that shocks Marina into recognition and produces her nervous breakdown which could be seen as an intelligent variation on a theme from the perspective of sound cinema. Visconti in *The Damned*, however, sticks to the visual catalyst of silent cinema albeit in a sound film of the sixties.

Sophie's crisis in *The Damned* is of a different nature than Marina's. Sophie was a strong, unscrupulous woman, but her strength is now broken, mentally and physically. She has difficulty understanding and accepting that her son has carried a lifelong hatred against her and has had forced sex with her. She loves him, but is it – rediscovered – maternal affection or a twisted form of carnal love? A short time later we get a new, exploratory *long take*, when Friedrich has tried to reach out to Sophie in vain. She is so grief-stricken that she does not listen and allows herself to be injected with morphine while looking at children's drawings beside her on the bed. The take starts with the doctor entering her room with his ominous, Nosferatu-like shadow gliding over her, before taking her arm and injecting her. The camera first zooms in on the arm, glides towards Sophie's face and then scans her whole body, down to her arm with the lock of Martin's hair, ending at the children's drawings. The first drawing has the caption 'Mutti und Martin' [mummy and Martin], the second 'Martin tötet Mutti' [Martin kills mummy]. The second drawing shows a blond boy in a blue sailor suit stabbing a woman with a feathered hat.⁵⁴⁵

The motive of visual exploration through scanning recurs no less than three times in *Ludwig*. In the first, during the coronation scene, the camera slides from an image of the crown to the tip of the coronation robe and then slowly 'climbs' along the mantle while simultaneously zooming out – in *Ludwig* camera movement is often combined with zooms. Eventually we see the entire mantle in full frame. Ludwig (Helmut Berger) enters the room with his entourage and the

544 Visconti's biographies indicate that he read Fogazzaro's novel and saw Gallone's *Malombra* in his youth, and that both fascinated him. Schifano 2009, p. 95.

545 Visconti had the mother and the child drawn by a young girl, but the child did not want to draw the knife in the hand of the child, so that Visconti drew it himself. He also added to the text himself. Schifano 2009, pp. 520-1.

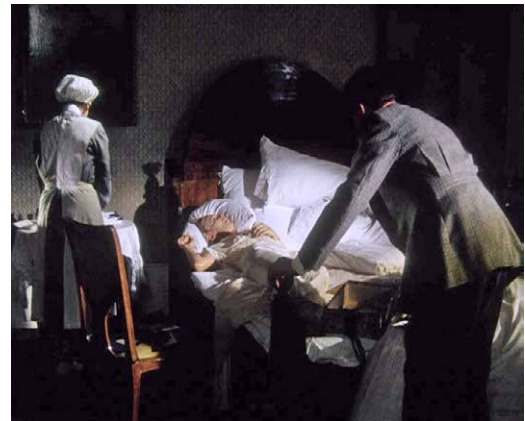


Fig. 269-274. *The Damned* (Luchino Visconti 1969).

mantle is solemnly posed on his shoulders. An attendant carries the crown on a pillow. A hard cut to a reverse shot shows Ludwig, adorned with the robe and scepter in hand, walking into an adjoining room past the dignitaries who bow to him. The second time the camera scans is during Ludwig's engagement to Sophie (Sonia Petrovna), the sister of Empress Elisabeth (Romy Schneider). The camera first films a crown (Ludwig's, apparently) in close up and pans left so that we see a second one. Once Ludwig's hands take the second crown, a backwards zoom follows and shows him putting it on Sophie's head. Standing in front of a large mirror, she is definitely not happy with this regal gesture. The regalia in both examples are used to express royal pomp and splendour but not very positively. The third scene shows a fight between Sophie and Elisabeth. Sophie claims that nothing has become of her engagement to Ludwig because he still loves her sister, Elisabeth, and, according to rumours, she reciprocates his love. Elisabeth slaps her before making up with her in name of female solidarity. The camera glides slowly up from the bottom of Elisabeth's metre-long hair until her head and Sophie's are framed in the shot. The shot seems to encapsulate why Elisabeth would be such a desirable woman for men.

In his study, *Figures traced in light: on cinematic staging* (2005), David Bordwell shows how the long take was used differently in Hollywood and postwar European cinema: 'In Hollywood it was used chiefly for virtuosic following shots, as in today's extended walk-and-talk sequences. By contrast, some postwar European filmmakers exploited it for the sake of what has come to be known as dedramatization'.⁵⁴⁶ He refers here to the 'draining the drama in emotionally charged situations', in particular with Antonioni, sustaining 'dead time' or suppressed emotions. This works otherwise in Visconti. As he already stated in his early manifesto, 'Il cinema antropomorfo'⁵⁴⁷ – in film only people count. All images return to dead matter once the humans are offscreen. Visconti saw cinema's potential as a fruitful exchange of theatre, opera, and film, and he preferred to dramatize human situations and to create emotional outbursts, a bit like Mizoguchi or the diva films from early Italian cinema. Both the actors' performances *and* the mobile framing sustain the narrative and, even more, the expression of emotion as in operatic arias. During these long takes *cum* mobile framing, the *mise en scène*, with all its sensual and almost tactile elements, often works as another main character. Only when the camera *stops* and the dialogue starts, however, can our gaze wander within the same space as the actors. We have more time and freedom then to scrutinize architecture, objects, and costumes which may or may not comment on characters and situations.

In this and the previous two chapters, we have seen how Visconti's films dealt with depth, by *repoussoirs*, by echoes of the frame through door and window openings, and by mobile framing. Although similar to developments in the imagination of depth in early modern and nineteenth-century painting, it also derives from the cinema of the silent period and especially of the 1930s and 1940s. Jean Renoir plays an important role here, yet his movies are embedded within a

546 David Bordwell, *Figures traced in light: on cinematic staging* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. 152.

547 Luchino Visconti, 'Cinema antropomorfo', *Cinema* 8, 173-174, (25 September-25 October 1943), pp. 108-9.

larger context of particular framing, deep staging, and mobile framing practices in many early sound films. What has not been addressed, nevertheless, is a separate area of staging in depth in which echoes of the film frame often recur. These are the scenes in which *mirrors* enter the picture and in which people are confronted with either themselves or with others. Sometimes mirrors seem to make moral judgments and at others they seem to possess magical powers as well.

Mirrors: Awkward Confrontations

Mirror, mirror on the wall... Mirrors already connoted magic in classical Antiquity: the Hebrews and Greeks foretold the future by means of them. After the rise of Christianity this practice continued in Europe with the *specularii*, mediums who divined the past, present, and future in – preferably dark – mirrors. The most well known popular example is, of course, the Wicked Queen’s mirror in *Snow White* but dark mirrors recur in other fairy tales, the Kabbala, regional folklore and even on Internet sites that advertise *catoptromancy* or the calling of supernatural powers through mirrors. In medieval and early modern Europe, people thought that mirrors could summon spirits and demons as we see in the fifteenth and sixteenth century stamps such as the woodcuts by Albrecht Dürer for *Der Ritter vom Turn* (1493). As late as the nineteenth century, diabolical images appeared in mirrors in the works by Félicien Rops and James Ensor.⁵⁴⁸ The Mirror of Erised in the *Harry Potter* book and film series shows the desire of the person looking into it to test his or her character.

We also encounter echoes of this in twentieth century cinema and particularly in Visconti. Persons suddenly appear in a mirror’s reflection while standing *offscreen*. In *Senso* Franz Mahler suddenly reappears at his lover Livia’s villa as if he were a ghost from her past. Visconti visualizes this entrance: Franz is, at first, on the left in the image, behind a semi-transparent bed curtain while his reflection simultaneously looms in the dark mirror almost in centre plan. Shortly after, he appears in the mirror while sitting *offscreen* while Livia sits at her vanity table. He plays with her green shawl in the same way that he plays with her feelings. Even though she has turned his back on him, she cannot escape her seducer’s face because of his reflection.

The use of real mirrors has become an established cinematic trope. It developed in the 1910s as a device in European silent cinema to set the new medium apart from theatre and to connect it more with painting, as Yuri Tsivian has shown (see below). When mirrors are used for visual dialogues between off-screen and on-screen characters and for creating suspense and voyeurism in silent film, *we* notice the offscreen other entering the frame though the central character does not. It then developed both in mainstream and avant-garde cinema in the 1920s and early 1930s, particularly in Germany in the films by Murnau, Pabst, and Lang, but also in Jean Cocteau’s avant-garde and mainstream films, *Le sang d’une poète* (1930), *La belle et la bête*, and *Orphée*, in which mirrors function as passages to another world,

548 This connotation of mirrors returned in recent films as well, as in *The Dark Mirror* (Pablo Proenza, 2006), *The Broken* (Sean Ellis, 2008) and *Mirrors* (Alexandre Aja, 2008).



Fig. 275-276. *Senso* (Luchino Visconti 1954).

comparable to Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass* (1870).⁵⁴⁹ It appeared in Hollywood in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. Think of the von Sternberg-Dietrich films, vampire films (where the vampire has no reflection), film noir, the mirror maze in Welles's *The Lady from Shanghai* (1948), and women's pictures directed by Douglas Sirk. Until recently mirrors have inspired not only studio filmmakers but also artists and found footage filmmakers such as Matthias Müller and Christophe Girardet for their 2006 compilation *Kristall*, which examines mirror scenes, particularly in American women's films of the 1940s and 1950s.

Mirrors embody a filmmaker's preference for a more *synthetic* approach with deep staging and lengthy shots instead of analytical editing that fragments scenes and actors into several shots. They also suggest that the diegetic space does not stop at the film frame's borders, through incorporating off-screen space and off-screen characters. They add a dimension to the filmic space, showing parts that otherwise would remain hidden; they break the stage's traditional fourth wall. Of course mirrors are often typical elements of film sets. People dress themselves in front of mirrors, check their faces and clothes, comb their hair, shave, and apply or remove make up. But mirrors can also be used in narrative and metaphorical ways, such as emphasising a character's introspection, showing his or her guilt or desire, providing passages to other worlds, and calling ghosts from the past or intimations of the future. Visconti's films use mirrors in all of these ways.

While aesthetic and formal-historical studies of mirrors *in painting* have long existed with such key works as those by G.S. Hartlaub (1951), Sabine Melchior-Bonnet (2001), and Mark Pendergrast (2003)⁵⁵⁰, research on mirrors *in film* was, until recently, mainly conducted from a psychologically-oriented perspective (Jacques Lacan's *mirror phase*) and by the feminist film theory based on it (such as in Teresa de Lauretis, Mary Ann Doane, and Anneke Smelik). In these works, the psychological and metaphorical uses of mirror were predominant, starting with film itself as mirror, rather than the ways in which real mirrors work within the camera frame.⁵⁵¹ Real mirrors in film sets are occasionally treated, however, by Doane and Smelik. Laura Mulvey and Christian Metz (important stepping stones for Smelik, Doane, and De Lauretis) connected the gaze into the mirror with the

549 Jean-Marc Lalanne and Philippe Azoury, eds., *Cocteau et le cinéma. Désordres* (Paris: Seuil, 2003). See also Walter A. Strauss, 'Orphée et Eurydice: mythes en mutation', in *Jean Cocteau. The Mask of Orpheus and Narcissus, Religiologiques* 15 (Spring 1997), <http://www.unites.uqam.ca/religiologiques/no15/strauss.html>, and Caroline Sheaffer-Jones, 'Fixing the Gaze: Jean Cocteau's La Belle et La Bête', *The Romanic Review* 93, 3 (May 2002), pp. 361-74.

550 G. S. Hartlaub, *Zauber des Spiegels. Geschichte und Bedeutung des Spiegels in der Kunst* (München: Piper, 1951). Sabine Melchior-Bonnet, *The Mirror. A History* (London: Routledge, 2001). Mark Pendergrast, *Mirror Mirror. A History of the Human Love Affair with Reflection* (New York: Basic Books, 2003). See also Stoichita 2015, pp. 214-227, and Jonathan Miller's exhibition catalogue *On Reflection* (London: National Gallery, 1998), as well as Simona Morini and Maria Perosino's exhibition catalogue, *Specchi. Scienza e coscienza allo specchio* (Genova: Palazzo della Borsa, 2007).

551 Teresa de Lauretis mainly talks about Lacan's mirror stage. In *Technologies of Gender. Essays on Theory, Film and Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 101, she also deals with a real mirror in Fellini's *Giulietta degli spiriti* (1965). In her article 'What meets the eye: feminist film studies' in Rosemarie Buikema and Anneke Smelik, eds., *Women's studies and culture: a feminist introduction* (London: Zed Books, 1995), p. 70, Smelik discusses the scene in *The Color Purple* (Steven Spielberg, 1985) in which Shug pulls Celie in front of the mirror and thus has her discover her sexuality. But this volume focuses more on Lacan's mirror phase than on real mirrors.



Fig. 277 (left). *Humoresque* (Jean Negulesco 1946). Fig. 278 (right). *La signora di tutti* (Max Ophüls).

creation of the ego in the *mirror phase* of Lacan's psychology. In *The Scientific Imaginary of Visual Culture* (2010), Smelik connects this to examples of real mirrors in film: 'Mulvey and Metz argue that the way in which the child derives pleasure from the identification with a perfect mirror image, is analogous to the way in which the film spectator derives narcissistic pleasure from identifying with the perfected image of the hero on the screen. In the case of a literal mirror in visual culture, whether in paintings, cinema, music videos or fashion photography, there is then a "double look": the primary one of the character looking into the mirror, and the secondary one of the spectator identifying with the character, mediated by the character (or painter)'.⁵⁵² Smelik also argues that mirrors stimulate characters' self-reflection. She discusses the motif of wounded cyborgs being repaired in front of mirrors as in Paul Verhoeven's *RoboCop* (1987). Not only do cyborgs seem to think, they are also troubled over their identity.

In *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s* (1987), Mary Ann Doane contended that Metz's theory on the viewer's symbolic identification is different with women than men because Lacan's mirror stage in a film is an exclusively male phenomenon.⁵⁵³ There is no question concerning control of the image, there is rather the combination of women and mirrors producing a certain distancing – more a

552 Anneke Smelik, 'Cinematic Fantasies of Becoming-Cyborg', in: idem ed., *The Scientific Imaginary of Visual Culture* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), pp. 93-4.

553 Susan Hayward, *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 286-306. According to Lacan's mirror phase or Imaginary Order, the male child held up to the mirror by his mother, starts to recognize itself and distantiates itself from the mother (recognising the sexual difference), even if its starting subjectivity is incited by the mother's pointing at his – ideal and unified – image. The child then enters the Symbolic Order, in which patriarchal rule and language are linked. However, the Imaginary Order doesn't entirely disappear, but remains in the shape of fetishism (the child longing to re-unify with the mother). A third category of subjectivity is the Real Order, referring to anything outside of the subject, who cannot make sense out of it (immediately). The subject is unable to speak about it, so it falls out of the Symbolic Order (say taboos, often linked to death and sexuality). Ibid., pp. 293-7. For Lacan the female subject doesn't exist, but Lacanian feminists have investigated female subjectivity. Ibid., p. 302. Within film theory, this has enabled readings against the grain, so deviating from the encoded reading. Spectator positioning for that reason has become more heterogeneous and pluralistic, Hayward argues.

combination of mirror and shop window, Doane concludes.⁵⁵⁴ She argues that mirrors were common in women's films of the 1940s because they signalled female protagonists' painful confrontations with themselves or with others. She provides as examples of the use of literal mirrors such films as *Stella Dallas* (King Vidor, 1937), *Since You Went Away* (John Cromwell, 1944), *To Each His Own* (Mitchell Leisen, 1946), and *Humoresque* (Jean Negulesco, 1946). In *Humoresque*, the violinist Paul (John Garfield) has chosen his career over the rich and beautiful but alcoholic Helen (Joan Crawford). In the final scene she drinks herself half blind and looks at her reflection in a glass door adorned with curled bars in her luxurious beach house. First she looks questioningly at herself and then throws her glass angrily at her image. The gap created in the glass door provides her with a figurative and spiritual solution, albeit negative: she walks out to the sea, to her death. This kind of tragic end is typical of women's pictures, Doane indicates, because the female protagonists ultimately suffer for their excessive desire.⁵⁵⁵ In her later book, *Femmes fatales: feminism, film theory, psychoanalysis* (1991), in addition to analysing Pabst's *Die Büchse der Pandora* (see below), Doane takes two examples from Ophüls's *La signora di tutti*. Before she goes to the wealthy Nanni family's ball, she asks herself in the mirror whether someone will ask her to dance (Roberto, the son, will eventually). The second time Gaby gazes in a mirror, she puts on a dress belonging to Roberto's mother. The first scene marks the beginning of her amorous relationship with Roberto; the second is the start of her relationship with his father, Leonardo. Doane observes: 'It's almost as though her own desire for her image were deflected, dispersed outwards to infect the one of the film'.⁵⁵⁶ Just as Gaby's earlier affair with a teacher led to the man's suicide, Gaby's affair with Leonardo leads to suicide as well, first by Mrs. Nanni and later by himself. Mirrors play a dangerous role in *La signora di tutti*, Doane suggests.

A more formal historical approach to the use of mirrors is rather lacking, as David Bordwell and Barry Salt confirmed to me.⁵⁵⁷ Thanks to DVD and the caption option this kind of research has been made easier. My focus will be on two themes: confrontation with oneself and confrontation with the other. Before turning to Visconti, though, we need to consider how mirrors have been used in the arts.

Foucault, Damisch, Stoichita: mirrors in art

In his seminal text on Diego Velázquez's painting *Las Meninas* (1656) in *The Order of Things* (originally *Les mots et les choses*, 1966), Michel Foucault indicated that this painting has a unique set up through its use of the mirror and the painting within the composition.⁵⁵⁸ We, the viewers, are put in the position of the painting's subject within the scene and thus can see only its back while those within the scene (Velázquez himself, the children, their governesses) can see its front. We watch those who watch us, but at the same time we can see who *we* are in a mirror in the

554 Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire. The Woman's Film of the 1940s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 15, 33. Doane bases herself on Luce Irigaray here.

555 Doane 1987, p. 178.

556 Mary Ann Doane, *Femmes fatales: feminism, film theory, psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 125.

557 Barry Salt to the author, 30 May 2006. David Bordwell to the author, 27 May 2006.

558 Michel Foucault, 'Las Meninas' in: *The Order of Things. An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge 2005), pp. 3-18. *The Order of Things* originally appeared as *Les mots et les choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), the first English edition dates of 1970.



Fig. 279 (left). Diego Velázquez, *Las Meninas* (1656). Museo del Prado, Madrid.

Fig. 280 (right). Detail. Diego Velázquez, *Las Meninas*, (1656). Museo del Prado, Madrid.

deep background, namely the king and queen of Spain. None of the represented figures notices the mirror; everyone is looking at us (the king and queen). There is no noticeable background in the mirror because it focuses only on the unseen 'because', as Foucault writes, 'of the structure of the painting and because of its existence as painting'.⁵⁵⁹ So *Las Meninas* is a kind of metathesis on visibility. More important than the figures, according to Foucault, is the formal structure: the functions of the mirror within the scene. The characters watch but so do the royal couple in the mirror and we as the third party of observers. The mirror containing the royal couple creates an imaginary centre: it is here that the three gazes of the painter, his models and the spectators come together. Foucault considered this breaking up of traditional representation as an act of liberation. Painting was no longer to be restricted to the likenesses of classic portraiture but was now able to represent *all* space.

In *The Origin of Perspective* (1994), Hubert Damisch responds to Foucault's text.⁵⁶⁰ He defends Foucault's interpretation against the art historical claim that Foucault was wrong in establishing the focal point of the painting in the mirror. Following Foucault, Damisch emphasizes what the painting does and what it transforms rather than what it represents. He makes a clear and convincing case that Foucault never claimed that the mirror was the geometric centre, but rather the painting had a moving centre, because the spectator's attention moves from the painter's perspective to the mirror, to the door in the back, to the light falling in, to the back of the painting, and to the watching eyes of the figures. Ultimately, the painting has an imaginary centre in which all three elements come together: the painter's gaze, the models of the royal couple in the mirror, and our own gaze as observers. For Foucault and Damisch, the imaginary structure is

559 Foucault 2005, p. 8.

560 'The Loci of the Subject', Damisch 1994, pp. 424-47.

more important than geometrical organisation. This is not too far off from Victor Stoichita's statements on Northern European artists' reflexive and metapictorial statements on the use of mirrors in their paintings. Perhaps it is not so strange these sentiments seem so close to Velázquez as they occurred at almost the same time. Damisch thus claims that *Las Meninas* is a representation of representation, not of a representation. I need to add that, based on studies of mirrors and their representation in art, such as Melchior-Bonnet's, we know that in the seventeenth century they had become status symbols and expensive goods; Velázquez had an enormous collection of them.⁵⁶¹ Their use in films, in particular in those by Visconti may, in fact, well compare with *Las Meninas*.

In *The Self-Aware Image* Victor Stoichita approaches these objects from a semiotic perspective.⁵⁶² Here the mirror is more image than sign, the map more sign than image and the painting is in-between. The mirror may be conceived of as a 'natural' sign because it does not replace the *signified object* but imagines it through its reflection. It reacts on the represented, referring to something that is not elsewhere. Only when a mirror refers to an off-screen person does it really become a *sign*. The mirror in a painting thus can serve as a metaphor for reality and thus also a metaphor for figurative, classic painting: a paradigm for *mimesis*. If you see mirrors on paintings without their reflection, but only as object, then the viewer remains on this side of the threshold, even if the character gazes into outside the frame, in adjacent spaces, just like off-screen space in cinema. By doubling the symbolic objects, interiors – which normally function as a *microcosmos* (a world within the frame) – become transformed into a *macrocosmos* (a totalising space). Painted mirrors are, of course, elements within a painting, but they also refer to the world beyond it. When part of the *mise en scène* focuses on dialogue between differently framed surfaces such as mirrors, maps, paintings on the wall, doors, and windows, we can speak of a *metapictorial* level. Representations within representations then become both image *and* sign. For that matter, we may also consider the visual dialogues in film by means of mirrors as *meta-filmic*.

In Jan van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait* (1434) we see the artist-as-witness via a convex mirror in the back of the scene. Through the mirror, we see a pseudo-portrait that permits us to make contact with the painter. Beginning in the sixteenth century, the artist's self-portrait within a picture changes, he no longer performs as witness but as a *model* in the mirror. This became a tradition that continues to this day, though it is now with artists in other media as well. Well-known examples are the self-portrait with convex mirror by Parmeggianino (c.1523-1524) and the self-portrait before a mirror by Toulouse-Lautrec (1882-1883). In the twentieth century this recurs in photographic self-portraits such as those by Ilse Bing (1931) and Herbert Bayer (1932). Incidentally, it was from the seventeenth century that artists generally started to use mirrors to paint their own self-portraits, though the mirror frame does not always appear in the painting. These kinds of self-portraits are often a kind of *mirror shot*. Rembrandt's famous self-portraits, painted using a mirror, do not show his *real* face but the mirrored version of it.

561 Melchior-Bonnet 2001, p. 168.

562 Stoichita 2015, ch. 7, 'Paintings, maps, and mirrors', pp. 214-227.

The confusion between the mirrored and the actual person seldom occurs in classical painting as the reflection is often presented as indistinct. In photography, however, this distinction is harder to make. For example, in the George Eastman House collection, nineteenth-century daguerreotypes exist of nude and clothed women in front of mirrors and mirror cabinets. The mirror images in photography begin to compete with the people who stand in front of them. In such nineteenth-century naturalistic paintings as those by Alfred Stevens, we find women in front of mirrors whose images remain faithful to them. The development of photography possibly played a role here (see Chapter 5 for Visconti's appropriation of Stevens).⁵⁶³ Finally, in nineteenth-century caricatures such as those by Honoré Daumier, the mirrored person is not only the same height as but also as clear as the real person.

Mirror and space with Visconti

Now that we have established a conceptual framework of looking at mirrors through Foucault, Damisch and Stoichita, we can ask: how does Visconti use them in his films? Before delving into the confrontation with oneself and with the Other, we need to consider briefly the relation of mirrors to *space*. Visconti reveals emotions in an indirect way, for instance by mirrors, because of the nature of his source material and because of his artistic vision. In *Senso*, Livia becomes devastated after suddenly seeing a ghost-like man on her balcony. Her fear is first revealed in the mirror to her right, and only afterwards does Visconti show her emotions directly. Of course, he could have filmed Livia from the front but, by not doing so, he maintained the unity of space. Besides, Visconti keeps the focus on her perspective though he does not employ any real POV shots. Had he filmed Livia's fear from the front, we would have seen her lover Franz's POV, which would have made it into a different kind of scene. So Visconti uses the mirror as an instrument to maintain the unity of space, which demonstrates his preference for the neoclassical aesthetic of unity of time, place, and action.⁵⁶⁴

Mirrors can also disorient the viewer whenever it is unclear if a *mirror shot* (a shot entirely filled by a reflection) or a real shot is being used. Equally disorienting is having actors ambiguously positioned in mirrors so that we cannot tell if they are in the filmic space. At the beginning of *Senso*, Visconti films two shots into the same mirror at the back of a theatre box in La Fenice. In the first, we see the stage curtains going up while Livia comments that Italians do not attend the opera for the music. In the second, we see Livia in the middle ground, next to the opera singer in the back, while awaiting her first meeting with Franz, creating a connotation between the fore- and background elements. The whole image is a reflection. Yet, while the mirror frame is visible, establishing a second frame

563 Lefebvre 2006 and Coles 1977.

564 This is also the reason that Visconti, in his adaptations of the novella *Senso* by Boito and the novels *Il Gattopardo* by Lampedusa and *Der Tod in Venedig* by Mann, deleted all prologues and epilogues, especially if they were located elsewhere than the central locations of the story, and evolved in a period other than that of the central action. First drafts of these scenarios in the Fondo Visconti still contain these prologues and epilogues, but during the writing process Visconti reasserted his neoclassical preference of unity of time, place, and action. See also Chapter 2 for the scripts for *The Leopard*.



Fig. 281-282. *Senso*
(Luchino Visconti
1954).

around the whole setting, one might miss out on this double framing because of Visconti's focus on the – centered – characters.

In these two shots, Visconti consciously plays with the visual ambiguity and forces the viewer to ask: where are we, where are the actors? What is true and what isn't? In the second mirror shot Livia comments that she does not like opera when it develops offstage, referring to an upheaval in the theatre that results from her cousin, the patriot Ussoni, challenging Franz, her future lover, to a duel. Though she does not know him yet, Livia will fall in love with Franz after a long night stroll through Venice and will turn into a melodramatic opera heroine herself. Within the early balcony scene, moreover, the mirror also emphasizes the ambiguity of the two main characters' behaviour. When they first meet, both Franz and Livia seem to be wearing theatre masks, they are putting on pretences. Thus, Visconti compels the viewer to ask: who is fooling whom? The mirror visually reinforces the characters' ambiguity.



Fig. 283. *White Nights* (Luchino Visconti 1957). Fig. 284 (right). Diego Velázquez, *The Toilet of Venus* ('*The Rokeby Venus*') (1647-1651). National Gallery, London.

In *Cahiers du cinéma* Willy Acher opened his article, 'Pour saluer Visconti', written for *Senso*'s Paris premiere in 1956, describing this mirror as containing the essence of Visconti's cinema.⁵⁶⁵ Acher argued that: 'Because of the sought-after framing and complex image, this shot is a good example of that well-studied form that Jansenist critics so reproached Visconti, while it is also one that uses mirrors for the unveiling of human beings and the aggravation of things, which so infuses the whole of Visconti oeuvre, and *Senso* in particular'.⁵⁶⁶ The corresponding shot synthetically demonstrates how the stage opera and the film melodrama converge, *melodrama* in the Italian operatic sense rather than the pejorative meaning that was used particularly in France in the 1950s for the designation of a certain kind of film.⁵⁶⁷

Confrontation with oneself. Positive and negative reflections.

In *White Nights* Natalia sneaks into the room of the tenant with whom she is in love. Embarrassed, she looks at herself in a mirror, while smaller mirrors beside and behind her double her face.⁵⁶⁸ She smells a little jar of ointment belonging to him, trying to appropriate his fragrance, her hands fluttering because she cannot cope with her emotions. When the man enters – we see his reflection in a mirror to his right – and notices what she is doing, she is startled and deeply ashamed though he is rather touched by her behaviour.

565 Willy Acher, 'Pour saluer Visconti', *Cahiers du cinéma* 57 (March 1956), pp. 4-17.

566 Acher (1956), p. 4. Jansenism was a political and religious movement in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which was critical of the autocracy and the secular power of the Roman Catholic Church. The Jansenists were seen by the Pope as heretics. Acher refers to some neo-realist film critics for whom an (over-)emphasis on film form was dismissed as suspicious and formalistic.

567 Georges Sadoul explicitly points at this construction of film opera at the press conference in occasion of the Paris presentation of *Senso*. A.B. [André Bazin], *Cahiers du cinéma* 56 (February 1956), p. 34.

568 The recent silent cinema spoof *The Artist* (2011) by Michael Hazanavicius has a similar scene in which the girl inspects her idol's room. She writes 'Thank You' on the mirror, reminding of the writings on the mirrors in the Sternberg films. When her idol enters the two are reflected together in two different mirrors. In one mirror the focus is first on their reflection in the mirror, then with the *pulling or racking focus* device the focus moves the couple itself, reminding of the mirror scene in Stroheim's *Foolish Wives*.

Visconti's protagonists, both men and women, mirror themselves in their displays of pride and vanity. Think of Tancredi at the ball in *The Leopard*, of the Nazi Aschenbach in *The Damned*, and of his namesake in *Death in Venice*. Think also of Maddalena in *Bellissima*, Anna in *Siamo donne*, Livia in *Senso*, Pupe in *Boccaccio '70*, Angelica in *The Leopard*, Elisabeth in *The Damned*, and her namesake in *Ludwig*. Before going deeper into Visconti's films, we must ask how this theme of self-confrontation recurs in art and in pre-Visconti cinema?

The figure of the person who mirrors him- or herself pleasurably is a longstanding secular topos which has produced such famous examples as *Woman in front of a mirror* (c. 1652) by Gerard Terborch and the *Rokeby Venus* (1647-1651) by Velázquez. In both cases we do not see the faces of the women directly but only through their reflections. As Yuri Lotman remarked in his 'The Text within a Text' (1981/1994), 'It is essential to recognize, however, that duplication means of a mirror is almost never simple replication. Rather, the right-left axis is reversed, or, even more frequently, a perpendicular axis is superimposed on the canvas or screen, creating a dimension or viewpoint outside of the surface'. While discussing the *Rokeby Venus*, Lotman continued: 'Besides the viewpoint of the observer, who sees Venus from behind, an additional perspective is added, directed on Venus's face, visible in the depths of the mirror'.⁵⁶⁹ Connected to the *Rokeby Venus* is the so-called Venus-effect. In reality, Venus could never see her own face in the mirror at that particular angle since it is tilted to allow us to see her face. Rather she would see the face of Velázquez (or the observer). This works in the same way in film: when we see a character watching her or his own reflection, the camera, not the actor, sees the reflection. By positioning the camera at a slightly oblique angle to the mirror and the actor, we see the ideal combination of person and reflection, without the camera entering the diegesis.⁵⁷⁰

In nineteenth-century painting many canvases feature ladies who mirror themselves pleasurably, such as the coquettish Parisian society ladies in the work of Alfred Stevens (e.g. *La Parisienne Japonaise/La robe japonaise*, c. 1872; Musée des Beaux-Arts, Liège), the proud Mme Jeantaud by Edgar Degas (*Madame Jeantaud au miroir*, c.1875; Musée d'Orsay, Paris) or the amorous, confident young woman in *Nello specchio* (1886 Museo Vela, Ligorretto) by the Northern Italian painter Spartaco Vela (see also Chapter 5 for Stevens as model for the costumes in *Senso*).⁵⁷¹ In *Vanité/Vanity* (1889, private collection) by Auguste Toulmouche, the woman is so enamoured of her reflection that she even kisses it. In the glamour photography of classical Hollywood and European cinema of the twenties, thirties, and forties, the woman and her reflection was also a favourite motif. These images were disseminated through postcards and illustrations in trade papers and fan magazines. They conveyed a positive, even seductive, image of a self-possessed

569 Yuri M. Lotman, 'The Text within the Text', *PMLA* 109, 3 (May 1994), pp. 377-84. This article originally appeared in Russian in 1981.

570 Marco Bertamini, Richard Latto, and Alice Spooner, 'The Venus-effect: people's understandings of mirror reflections in paintings', *Perception* 32 (2003), pp. 593-9, <http://www.liv.ac.uk/~marcob/Publications/BLS2003.pdf>.

571 For Stevens's painting, see Coles 1977, pp. 42-5; for Vela's painting: Maria Angela Previtera, Sergio Reborá, eds., *Dall'Accademia all'Atelier. Pittori tra Brera e il Canton Ticino nell'Ottocento* (Milano: Electa, 2000), p. 95.



Fig. 285-286. *Die Büchse der Pandora* (G.W. Pabst 1929).

woman who looks in the mirror or at the viewer, with the mirror often doubling or tripling the view by revealing her face, figure or legs. Mirrors also emphasized the opulence of the setting as an *asset*; large mirrors were associated with luxurious decors. Theatrical promotions that placed actors in front of mirrors were also a popular motif. Thus, in the twenties the French magazine *Comoedia* issued a large series of postcards with stage actors photographed in their locker rooms entitled, ‘*Nos artistes dans leur loge*’. Invariably, the dressing room mirror was used to double the image – but also the status – of the actor or actress.

Yet, mirrors also evoke discomfort through their direct and impersonal confrontation with oneself. The Swedish filmmaker Ingmar Bergman often used mirrors in this way, from *Smultronstället* (*Wild Strawberries*, 1957), in which the protagonist, a retired professor (Victor Sjöström) approaching death, is confronted with his past and his character, to the metaphorical mirror in *Såsom i en spegel* (*Through a Glass Darkly*, 1961), and to the confrontation of the two women in front of a mirror in *Persona* (1966): the latter quoted in *Mulholland Drive* (2001) by David Lynch.⁵⁷² Lynch’s film contains another important mirror moment, when the mystery woman (Laura Elena Harring), suffering from amnesia and being asked her name, calls herself Rita after seeing the reflection an old poster of Rita Hayworth in a mirror.⁵⁷³

Discomforting mirrors have a long tradition in film history and are particularly prominent in German cinema around 1930, especially in films by Georg Wilhelm Pabst, Josef von Sternberg, and Fritz Lang. The creative use of mirrors in film sets includes *Die Büchse der Pandora* (*Pandora’s Box*, 1929), Pabst’s late silent masterpiece. Lulu (Louise Brooks), the mistress of the wealthy publisher Dr. Schön (Fritz Kortner), has chased away his fiancée by compromising him. Feeling obliged

572 For Bergman and mirrors, see Maaret Koskinen, *Mirrors and Mirroring: A Study of Ingmar Bergman’s Aesthetics* (Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 1993). For mirror shots in *Mulholland Drive*, see Paolo Bertetto, ‘L’analisi interpretativa. “Mulholland Drive” e “Une femme mariée”’ in: idem ed., *Metodologie di analisi del film* (Bari: Laterza, 2007/2006), pp. 246-50. See also Paolo Bertetto, *Lo specchio e il simulacro. Il cinema nel mondo diventato favola* (Milano: Bompiani, 2007), in particular the chapter ‘Lo specchio e l’immagine riflessiva’, pp. 131-55.

573 The reflection that she sees is the famous poster for *Gilda* (Charles Vidor, 1946).

to marry her, Schön catches her at their wedding with two old drinking buddies, Schigolch and Quast. He chases the two away with a gun, scaring away the other wedding guests as well. After he discovers that his own son, Alwa, also loves Lulu, Schön freaks out. She has destroyed his reputation and his life. He decides to have her commit suicide and presses his gun into her hands although she ends up shooting him accidentally.

Lulu admires herself in front of a large mirror and starts undressing. She bends down to take off her necklace, but when she rises again, she is suddenly frightened her husband's massive presence in the mirror's reflection. Startled, she steps back, almost out of the picture, but we still see Schön's looming reflection. This scene is well described and visualized in Mary Ann Doane's 1990 article, 'The Erotic Barter: Pandora's Box (1929)'.⁵⁷⁴ She describes the scene thus: 'Lulu, gazing admiringly at her own image in the mirror, begins to take off her wedding gown. In a closer shot, she removes her necklace and as she bends down to set it aside the ghostly image of Schön appears in the mirror to fill the space she leaves vacant. When she rises again, Lulu is startled by the image of Schön, his gaze fixed upon her. Schön's presence here as a virtual image lends to his figure an even greater terror. Because the mirror image, psychoanalytic mark of an illusory identity, is shared both by Lulu and Schön, it can be interpreted by a double perspective. The free and joyful sexuality represented by Lulu seems to call forth its weighty, cumbersome other, signaled by the presence of Schön and his problematic of sexual guilt. On the other hand, Schön's guilt requires Lulu's image'.⁵⁷⁵

The scene therefore portrays a confrontation with the 'proper' person in the mirror – the narcissistic Lulu – as well as with the Other (Schön) whom Lulu sees first virtually, through his mirrored reflection. In his book *Weimar Cinema and After*, Thomas Elsaesser responds to Doane's article by focusing on the scene of Schön's death: 'By far the most disturbing, because virtually unreadable (unreadable not in its narrative logic but in the logic of the glance-glance, facial expression, space and gesture) is the death of Dr Schön. Schön tries to persuade Lulu to kill herself after he has surprised her in the conjugal bedroom with Alwa's head cradled in her lap. Pabst stages the scene in a series of medium shots, with Lulu and Schön cut off at the waist. As Schön tries to force the gun into Lulu's hand, both of them are reflected in the bedroom mirror. From then on it is almost impossible for the spectator to decide whether he is looking at Schön or his mirror image, whether Schön is looking at Lulu, at the camera or at himself'.⁵⁷⁶ It is this confusion that also makes it one of the film's most exciting moments.

In addition, we have the mirror moments in *Der blaue Engel* (*The Blue Angel*, 1930), Josef von Sternberg's first sound feature, a film which Visconti always appreciated and which he might have seen in Paris in the thirties or in Italy in

574 Mary Ann Doane, 'The Erotic Barter: Pandora's Box (1929)', in Eric Rentschler ed., *The films of G. W. Pabst. An Extraterritorial Cinema* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), pp. 76-9.

575 Doane 1990, p. 76.

576 Thomas Elsaesser, *Weimar Cinema and After. Germany's historical imaginary* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 284. Elsaesser's description is not completely accurate. The gun comes only onscreen after Lulu and Schön have stepped away from the mirror. The subsequent shots are neither *mirror shots*, nor shots in which the mirror can be seen.



Fig. 287-291. *Der blaue Engel* (Joseph von Sternberg 1930).

its corrupted, Italianate version.⁵⁷⁷ More than eighty years later, *Der blaue Engel's* story of a provincial professor (Emil Jannings) who becomes impoverished and ridiculed due to his love for Lola-Lola, a cabaret singer (Marlene Dietrich), retains its acrid quality. His decay is ruthlessly depicted. The professor is reduced to performing as a clown in front of his townsfolk and former students before collapsing emotionally and psychologically. Early in the film, we see a student hiding behind Lola-Lola's folding screen, so that she undresses coquettishly in

⁵⁷⁷ Visconti may have seen the film in Paris, where *Der blaue Engel* was released on 13 November 1930, at the Studio des Ursulines, where it screened for fourteen months. Parisian cinemas repeatedly re-showed the film, as in 1937 and 1939 at Henri Langlois's Cercle du Cinema, the forerunner of the Cinémathèque française. Contrary to what Servadio writes, *Der blaue Engel* was screened in Italy in ...

view of the professor who is searching for his wayward charges. When the professor discovers him, we see his reflection in the triple mirror behind him. After Lola has teasingly blown her powder in the professor's face, we see his reflection again. Von Sternberg's most telling use of the reflection, however, occurs at the end of the film. The once respected and distinguished professor has fallen to the status of a clown after having married Lola and spent all his money travelling with her. Sitting in front of the mirror, he gradually transforms into the clown. We see only his face in the mirror while the doubling of a burning candle indicates how to interpret this *mirror shot*. The decay of the man is evident throughout this remarkably long take. He does his own make up, puffs on a cigarette, coughs, and puts on his false nose, wig, and oversized collar. Only in the next shot does the space and everyone's relationship within it become clear. The director (Kurt Gerron) torments the poor professor by telling him that he will act as a clown in his hometown where everyone knows him and where he once had authority. The professor categorically refuses and Lola putatively defends her husband, though she still insists on his cooperation.

Shortly afterwards, von Sternberg repeats the use of a mirror shot followed by a deferred establishing shot when, in the dressing room of the Blue Angel, we see the professor being made up by the agitated director. Only after the mirror shot, do we get a medium shot of both characters in front of the mirror, indicating the setting and the position of the actors within it. Forced to go on stage, the professor is almost at the very end of his wits when he sees Lola and her new lover, Mazeppa (Hans Albers), passing by in the mirror's reflection. We first see her enter through her mirrored image on the left and then arrive onscreen from the right. She obviously has no compassion for this loser and is not the least embarrassed about her new boyfriend. Then she goes offscreen, though we still see her through her reflection in the left part of the frame, giving a disapproving look at the professor

...the early 1930s. The film ran for example, between 25 February and 2 March 1931 at the Cinema Teatro San Carlo in Milan, and around the same time in the Cinema Ambrosio in Turin, both first run theatres. In Italy, however, neither the German nor the English sound version of the film was shown. For international audiences – not every cinema in Europe had already switched to sound film projection – a silent film version with intertitles was made in Berlin. This one was 'Italianized' by Carlo Bugiani. Just like *The Jazz Singer* (1927), the film was shown almost like a silent film screening, to which a musical commentary was added. The two songs 'Ich bin die Fesche Lola' and 'Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuss' were sung by an Italian singer in Italian. The Italian film critics praised the film and the actors, but considered the musical inserts to be terrible. Vittorio Martinelli, *Dal dottor Caligari a Lola-Lola. Il cinema tedesco degli anni Venti e la critica italiana* (Gemona La Cineteca del Friuli, 2001), p. 11. Mario Quargnolo, *La parola ripudiata. L'incredibile storia dei film stranieri in Italia nei primi anni del sonoro* (Gemona: Cineteca del Friuli, 1986), p. 80. Fernando Tettoni, 'L'Angelo Azzurro' *Cinemondo* 83 (5 March 1931), pp. 9-10. Incidentally *Der blaue Engel* was based on a book by Heinrich Mann, *Professor Unrat*, which initially was to be filmed by Pabst. See Hans-Michael Bock, 'Georg Wilhelm Pabst. Documenting a Life and a Career', in Rentschler (1990), p. 222.



Fig. 292. *M* (Fritz Lang 1931).

and belittling him verbally. Mazeppa, who is onscreen, talks to the right of the off screen space where Lola is situated before he – symbolically – joins her offscreen.⁵⁷⁸

The third director who regularly plays with mirrors is Fritz Lang, especially in *M*, his first sound film. In his monograph, *The Films of Fritz Lang: Allegories of Vision and Modernity* (2001), Tom Gunning writes that Lang presents the child serial killer, Beckert, as a doppelgänger, both victim and perpetrator, a kind of Peer Gynt, an introverted child but also a monster and a bogeyman. Gunning argues that Lang shows this through the use of mirrors and provides three examples.⁵⁷⁹ First we see Beckert (Peter Lorre) at home, watching himself in the mirror, playful and provocative. But while he makes an ever-growing grin, his dual nature emerges and he turns into a dangerous type, just as the off-screen voice of a graphologist describes him. Gunning describes the scene: ‘He cannot hide from this monster’s eyes, the horrifying face that stares out from the mirror is so terrifying because it is a face terrified by itself’.⁵⁸⁰ Later while the serial killer carelessly stands across from the window of a knife shop eating an apple, he suddenly sees a little girl in the window’s reflection, aptly framed by a display of knives, as if in the frame of a portrait. Beckert stiffens, rubs his mouth, and his obsession takes hold of him. He whistles the theme of *Peer Gynt*, the Leitmotiv in *M* and briskly walks away, and we in the audience understand that this child will be his next victim. The third moment is the most famous when, while enjoying a toy shop window display, the girl shows Beckert that he has an ‘M’ for Mörder (killer) on his shoulders. Until then, he thought his alter ego was invisible to others. He looks in a mirror

578 Von Sternberg would continue this creative and inventive use of mirrors in his American movies with Dietrich. In *Morocco*, von Sternberg and Dietrich’s first American film, we see Tom Brown (Gary Cooper) in the dressing room of his beloved Amy Jolly (Dietrich), gazing at himself. He has a moment of introspection, realising he cannot go on with their affair because of their class differences. With lipstick, he writes a brute farewell on the mirror: ‘I changed my mind. Good luck!’ In *Blonde Venus*, Helen Faraday (Dietrich) went through a deep valley, and has to give up her child because of an affair with the playboy Nick Townsend (Cary Grant). After her comeback as a performer in Paris, Townsend looks for her in her dressing room and sees on a mirror wall a text – a motif in von Sternberg? – by Kipling: ‘Down to Gehenna, or up to the throne, he travels fastest who travels alone!’ (Gehenna standing for hell). From this text Nick understands Helen’s loneliness even though afterwards she acts extremely cool to him.

579 Tom Gunning, *The Films of Fritz Lang: Allegories of Vision and Modernity* (London: BFI, 2001), pp. 178-9, 188-92.

580 Gunning 2001, p. 179.

hanging in a shop, sees the mark of Cain and panics in the awareness that he has been discovered. As Gunning describes it: 'In being caught in the eyes of others, Beckert's phantasy world also collapses, his private world, his childlike idyll at the shop window ends'.⁵⁸¹

Lang was one of the filmmakers who worked most with mirrors, both in his early German and in his later Hollywood *film noir* movies of the thirties and forties.⁵⁸² This inspired directors like Robert Siodmak, another German who moved to America in the thirties, to use mirrors inventively in their work. Think of films like *Phantom Lady* (1944), *The Spiral Staircase* (1945), and *The Dark Mirror* (1946). In *The Spiral Staircase* a huge mirror is positioned halfway down a grand staircase in the hall. When the mute girl Helen stands before it, the camera tracks in on the eye of the killer observing her. We then see her from his perspective. In his mind, she has no mouth in the mirror's reflection (reminiscent of a scene in Buñuel and Dalí's *Un chien andalou*, 1929). When the killer is about to murder her, he confronts her, and her muteness before this same mirror. In *The Dark Mirror* the twin sisters talk just like characters do in Visconti's films: one person onscreen, the other offscreen but visible through a mirror. Both sisters were played by Olivia de Havilland, which required some visual effects. Analysing the film in *Senses of Cinema* (2004), Darragh O'Donoghue noted the film's elliptical structure is sustained by its use of mirrors: '*The Dark Mirror* (1946) is almost Bach-like in its play with symmetry and counterpoint – the film opens with credits over Rorschach-test inkblots, and a room with a broken mirror, and ends in a room with a broken mirror, and "The End" imprinted on an inkblot. The plot concerns identical twins, one of whom may be a murderess, and the two men who try to catch them out'.⁵⁸³ According to O'Donoghue, the mirror in *The Dark Mirror* has more to do with the vocabulary of German Expressionist film and culture than with psychoanalytic interpretation. The mirror is on a par with elements like *doppelgänger*s and hypnosis. Indeed, it is not difficult to see these two connected to mirrors, as can be seen in the early Expressionist film *Der Student von Prag* (*The Student of Prague*, Hans Heinz Ewers/ Stellan Rye, 1913), in which the mirror image becomes the *doppelgänger* and the student's evil twin brother. In *The Dark Mirror* too, one sister is the evil mirror and the double of the other, though for a long time it is unclear who is who.

Scott Snyder writes more generally about mirrors and *film noir* in 'Personality Disorder and the Film Noir Femme Fatale' (2001). He argues that the narcissism of *femmes fatales* in *film noir* is demonstrated by how they regard themselves in the mirror, completely absorbed in themselves, while ignoring the men around them. Their narcissism leads to violence and deceit that seems to be connected with the evil forces attributed to mirrors in earlier times. According to Snyder: 'Scenes involving mirrors are quite common with these women. This may

581 Ibid, p. 192.

582 Later examples are *The Woman in the Window* (1944), *Scarlet Street* (1945), *House by the River* (1950), *The Blue Gardenia* (1953), *The Big Heat* (1953), and *While the City Sleeps* (1955).

583 Darragh O'Donoghue, 'The Dark Mirror', *Senses of Cinema* 31 (February 2004). http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/cteq/04/dark_mirror.html For Siodmak, see also Hervé Dumont, *Robert Siodmak, maître du film noir* (Paris: Ramsay, 1998).



Fig. 293 (left). *La bête humaine* (Marcel Carné 1938). Fig. 294 (right). *Mayerling* (Anatole Litvak 1936).

represent the devious, cunning nature of these women, where “nothing and no one is what it seems...often times, these tenebrous reflections are more powerful than the real women they mirror” [...] The “mirror shots” also indicate women’s duplicitous nature: they are visually split, thus not to be trusted. The mirror motif also contributes to the murky confusion of *film noir*: nothing and no one is what it seems’.⁵⁸⁴ The most eminent *mirror shot* is surely in Welles’s *The Lady from Shanghai*, where in the final scene Elsa Bannister (Rita Hayworth) faces all of her opponents in a fairground hall of mirrors. As Snyder remarks: ‘As the funhouse mirror shatters the frame, they reveal the many faces of this *femme fatale*, in some of the mirrored panels appearing strong and self-confident, in others weak and vulnerable. The spectator joins with the protagonists in viewing all of these aspects of her personality, so that the shot elicits both a literal (physical) point of view and a figurative (emotional) one as well’.⁵⁸⁵

Characters in cinema are often confronted with their bad conscious in front of mirrors, for example, after committing a murder in *Variété* (Variety, E.A. Dupont, 1925) or in *La bête humaine* by Renoir, Visconti’s mentor. The mirror’s reflection then calls for shame or remorse. In *La bête humaine* Jean backs out from murdering Séverine’s husband, Roubaud. Just at the moment when she gives him an iron bar to kill him, he looks in a pool of water and sees his own face. His conscience speaks to him because he decides, to Séverine’s chagrin, that he cannot murder Roubaud after his reflection in both senses of the word.⁵⁸⁶ Sometimes moral confrontations result in the mirror’s destruction as in *Bigger than Life* (1956) by Nicholas Ray and

584 Scott Snyder, ‘Personality Disorder and the Film Noir Femme Fatale’, *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture* 8, 3 (2001), pp. 161-2.

585 Snyder 2001, p. 162. Snyder’s analysis seems akin to the analysis of 1940s *women’s films* by Mary Ann Doane in *Desire to Desire*. Doane 1987, p. 42, writes that at the time people criticized an excess of female narcissism as a similar function to the male gaze in Hollywood cinema, mentioning the example of *The Dark Mirror*. For Doane, see earlier in this chapter.

586 At the beginning of *La bête humaine* Séverine, after coming home, stands before the mirror while Roubaud interrogates her. The jealous Roubaud discovers that she has a relationship with her guardian, Grandmorin, and beats her. In the mirror not only Séverine’s hypocrisy but also Roubaud’s homicidal tendencies become clear.

The Red Shoes (1948) by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger. In *Le jour se lève*, François (Jean Gabin) wants to smash the mirror, which reminds him of better times with his lover, Franço (Jacqueline Laurent). In *Mayerling*, a drunken Crown Prince Rudolf (Charles Boyer) shoots a mirror to pieces with his gun, because of his disgust with his reflection and himself. In *Die zweite Heimat – Chronik einer Jugend* (*Leaving Home*, Edgar Reitz, 1992), Hermann (Henry Arnold) waits in vain for Clarissa in an Amsterdam hotel. He looks at his frightened face in a mirror and throws an ashtray against it. His face is then reflected countless times in the fragments, visualising his own split personality. Often men smash mirrors, as the avant-garde compilation *Kristall* emphasized. They loathe themselves or they are furious at their wives' narcissism. But women destroy mirrors too such as in *Humoresque* when Helen breaks her reflection before committing suicide. In *Tommy* (Ken Russell, 1975), based on the Who's rock opera, Tommy's mother (Ann-Margaret) throws her son (Roger Daltrey) through a mirror to relieve him of his obsession with it. Yuri Lotman also names *Le Corbeau* (*The Raven*, 1943) by Henri-Georges Clouzot as a key example.⁵⁸⁷ In this film, the icy nurse Marie Corbin (Hélène Manson) is suspected of murder and is hunted down. Once home, she sees that her furnishings have been demolished. She sees her broken psyche literally in a broken mirror, similar to the fragmented psyche in *Heimat*.

Confrontation with oneself in Visconti's films

Visconti's films also contain many similarly awkward situations but without the mirror's material destruction. When Giuliana in *L'innocente* returns home from her affair, she regards herself in a mirror, lifting her veil and staring with guilt, but also with curiosity and confusion – a bit like *Nello specchio* by Vela – even though her guilt fails to restrain her. At the back of this scene an omen peeks though: an antique painting of a child, the future consequence of Giuliana's adultery (see also Chapter 2). Giuliana's mirror, therefore, functions as a moral judge and as a flash-forward. The same is true in the beginning of *Ludwig*. Just before his coronation as King of Bavaria, Ludwig is what we would call 'severely stressed', drinking a lot of champagne to ease his nerves. While he looks at himself in a mirror, we see his younger brother and his uncle in the reflection watching him embarrassedly. They too provide non-verbal commentary, just like in *L'innocente*.

The Leopard also contains these kinds of awkward and negative confrontations. One is the ironic confrontation between the unkempt family priest, Padre Pirrone, and the prince, who has just bathed after the family's long, hot journey through Sicily. The camera first shows Don Fabrizio reflected in a *trumeau* (a man-sized mirror hanging between windows) and in a smaller mirror to the side. Feeling ashamed about the prince's comments about his appearance and smell, Father Pirrone steals some aftershave and walks to the smaller mirror to look at his unshaven head. The camera shows him finally in a *mirror shot* which fills the entire frame. The picture is so clear that it would be difficult to establish whether the man is offscreen or onscreen had we not had the previous shot. To paraphrase from Gilles Deleuze, the *virtual* image has become an *actual* one. In his book

587 Lotman 1994, p. 381.



Fig. 295-299. *The Leopard* (Luchino Visconti 1963).

Cinema 2. The Time Image (2005) Deleuze indicates the mirror image is usually a virtual image *vis à vis* the real character reflected by the mirror, dependent on and subordinate to him or her. It becomes actual and independent, however, as soon as we see nothing but the reflected person in the frame.⁵⁸⁸

This occurs again in *The Leopard* towards the end of the ball when Don Fabrizio realizes that only old age and death is left for him. He is in a makeshift bathroom where we first see him in medium long shot looking into a mirror. The prince's face is only visible in the reflection as he is mostly seen from the back. Visconti then cuts to a mirror shot, an extreme close-up of his face that accentuates the emotional drama of the moment because the proud prince sheds a tear. We only recognize this as a mirror shot because of the preceding shot. Visconti then cuts to a camera angle to Don Fabrizio's left to continue the prince's trajectory through the space. He is again in medium long shot but now from a slightly higher angle. This time his face's reflection in the mirror is unseen, though it is instead in another mirror to his side and in front of us. Visconti here visually anticipates the last two chapters of Lampedusa's novel that describe the prince's death and afterlife, though he did not film them (see also Chapter 2 for the shortening of Lampedusa's novel for Visconti's film version). A slow farewell waltz accentuates the scene's melancholy and *vanitas*, as do the filled chamber pots in the adjacent room. The prince is both figuratively and literally alone in this scene, which contrasts sharply with the preceding sequence showing the attendees dancing a polonaise.

Although Visconti's mirrors are not smashed like in the aforementioned examples, as Bruno Braure has remarked, male aggression and self-hatred is vented on reflective objects, by smashing glasses, as Gino does at the singing competition in *Ossessione*, Simone in the bar in *Rocco and His Brothers* and Franz's confrontation with Livia at the end of *Senso*. According to Braure, the smashed glass is a classic death symbol.⁵⁸⁹ Here he also refers to the piece of mirror near the well that Franz picks up to look at himself and the glass cover protecting the lock of hair from the medallion that Franz has sold off.

Dialogues by mirrors. Confrontation with the Other

Visconti uses mirrors not only to show people confronting their inner selves but also other people. Someone stands onscreen, the other offscreen but appears onscreen through his or her reflection, talking to the on-screen character. Since characters talk to each other without the classical device of *analytical editing* (in which the camera alternates between characters and shows them in separate, closer shots), this alternative can be considered as a kind of *interior editing*: the unity of time, place, and action is maintained. We have a *synthetic*, rather than analytical, structure reminiscent of the theatre. Visconti's experience as theatre and opera director might play a role in his use of mirrored space but it is also a legacy from European silent cinema. Nonetheless these dialogues and confrontations also have their precursors in painting as previously illustrated by the *Arnolfini portrait* by van Eyck and Velázquez's *Las Meninas*.

588 Deleuze 2005, *Cinema 2*, p. 68.

589 Bruno Braure, 'La question dramaturgique', in: Lagny 1990, p. 109.



Fig. 300-305. *La terra trema* (Luchino Visconti 1948).

Visconti often stages this kind of dialogue between off-screen and on-screen characters in his films, metaphorically uniting characters who may be antagonists. *La terra trema* contains a perfect example of this. When Cola wants to escape from the misery of Sicily, his elder brother 'Ntoni tries to prevent him from leaving. They stand in front of a mirror, scarcely lit by candlelight emanating from a low source, almost Caravaggesque.⁵⁹⁰ Visconti shifts the viewer's attention from the two to their reflections and back. First Cola stands in front of the mirror so that we do not see his reflection. He takes a photo of 'Ntoni and recalls the days when the latter was able to have ideals and to travel. In the reflection we see 'Ntoni in the back, sitting on a bed.

'Ntoni himself then enters the screen and we see his reflection. He points out that they are family and should stick together in troubled times.

Visconti then cuts to a *reverse shot*, in which 'Ntoni's reflection has disappeared and Cola's is now visible, the focus clearly now on him. He gazes directly into the mirror, speculating about his chances and opportunities, as if his future lies hidden there – a shot that brings us back to the magic powers of mirrors. A two-shot follows of the reflections of both brothers united in the mirror. The elder brother, 'Ntoni is represented as the smaller of the two, looking with hope and fear at the other. Next the camera pans to a two-shot of the brothers. In close up 'Ntoni cries because he has failed to convince Cola to stay. In the following shot, 'Ntoni leaves the room, warning his brother that their fight is here, not elsewhere. The rain outside seems to reflect his tears. In the end he leaves the room, seen from the back. The film critic Lisa Rosen sees this scene as 'Ntoni moving into the past and Cola into the future, to the mainland, where his story will continue thematically in *Rocco and His Brothers*'.⁵⁹¹ *Rocco*, indeed, treats the troubles of a Southern Italian family who migrate to Milan in the industrial north, which serves as a metaphor for the *Mezzogiorno* issue of internal Italian migration.⁵⁹²

Combining on-screen with off-screen framing, Visconti's mirrors also express desires. Early in *The Leopard*, when Don Fabrizio is shaving himself, his nephew Tancredi enters announcing that he is joining Garibaldi's army. While the prince stands before the mirror, Tancredi's smiling face appears there as a ghost. The film critic Vito Zagarrìo argues that 'the face of Tancredi seems to replace that of Don Fabrizio'.⁵⁹³ Visconti shows here the prince's affection for his nephew. Tancredi

590 Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571-1610) was an Italian painter known for his use of chiaroscuro. He let theatrical light beams shed light on the depicted characters and deliberately put parts of the representation in the dark. Georges de La Tour (1593-1652) was a French painter who, like Caravaggio, worked with a strong chiaroscuro, but unlike the Italian he often showed the light source – often a burning candle – in the image. Unlike the theatrical drama of Caravaggio, La Tour goes for serenity and stillness.

591 Lisa Rosen, 'Sound and Temporality: Voice – over in Visconti's *La terra trema*' (undated), http://www.luchinovisconti.net/visconti_al/visconti_sound.htm.

592 The *Mezzogiorno* refers to the poor and subordinated South of Italy (south of Rome), opposed to the rich, industrial and agricultural North in Italy, and hindered by extortion by the North, feudalism, focus on agriculture, lack of raw materials, energy and infrastructure, low production, and the presence of organized crime. By consequence the *Mezzogiorno* problem also refers to the 1950s and 1960s migration of poor peasants from the South to the industrial cities Milan and Turin.

593 'Ad esempio, in una delle prime sequenze del film, il volto di Tancredi sembra sostituirsi a quello di Don Fabrizio (presagio di quella 'sostituzione' che avverrà in sede 'politica'); e gli specchi si moltiplicano'. Vito Zagarrìo, 'Lo sguardo dell'eccellenza. Note sulla regia', in Miccichè 1996, p. 67.



Fig. 306. *The Leopard* (Luchino Visconti 1963).



Fig. 307-308. *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer* (Henry Hathaway 1935).

functions as a younger version of the prince as well as his – questionable – prospects for the future, as Zagarrío also indicates: ‘a foreshadowing of the “substitution” which will take place in the “political” headquarters’.⁵⁹⁴ This anticipates Don Fabrizio’s acceptance of Tancredi’s involvement in the war that happens during the same scene. At first opponents, they have become like-minded by the scene’s end.

Visconti’s style becomes even clearer if we compare that scene to a similar one in Henry Hathaway’s *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer* (1935), a film dear to Visconti.⁵⁹⁵ Lieutenant Alan McGregor (Gary Cooper) shaves himself in front of a mirror while talking to the arrogant young upstart and commander’s son, Lieutenant Donald Stone (Richard Cromwell), whom McGregor ‘fathers’ in place

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 67.

⁵⁹⁵ ‘Paris has been delicious, even if only briefly! I have heard four plays and saw two films, one of which was magnificent! It is called *Les trois lanciers de Bengale*. I cried my eyes out! The weather was a miracle, Spring-like, and I love Paris in this season’, Visconti wrote to Puppe on 21 March 1935. Luchino Visconti to Irma Windisch-Graetz, 21 March 1935, published in ‘Lettere d’amore di Luchino Visconti alla sua fidanzata austriaca. “Mia cara, sono così solo e coí triste lontano da te”’, *Gente* (5 April 1976), pp. 10-11. Visconti saw the movie during its French premiere week. *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer* was released around 15 March 1935, at the Paris Paramount cinema on the Boulevard des Capucines, near the Paris Opéra.

of the actual one.⁵⁹⁶ The Hollywood rules of analytical editing are respected so that the camera films Cooper and his reflection in the mirror together, but the off-screen character (Cromwell) only becomes visible in the reverse shot. Cooper first talks to him through the mirror in medium shot. Only afterwards does he turn around and speak to him directly in a two-shot showing both actors. *The Leopard's* shaving scene also features shots of a character and his reflection or two-shots of two characters with one reflected in a mirror.⁵⁹⁷ In contrast to Hathaway, however, Visconti also combines both on-screen and off-screen characters synthetically in one image. As we've seen before, Visconti uses this kind of visual dialogue from his first film, *Ossessione*, onwards. After Gino and Giovanna have sex for the first time, he sees (and we see) Giovanna in his shaving mirror talking to him as in *The Leopard*. Likewise the aforementioned scene from *La terra trema*: the roles are reversed, the off-screen person can be seen through the mirror.

In *Bellissima*, Maddalena and her daughter visit an elderly studio photographer. His wife is disabled but insists on keeping an eye on everything, including using an angled mirror to check on her husband. In the sitting room where he plies his trade, a large, obliquely posed mirror that stands next to the door reflects Maddalena, who stands offscreen; thus she is situated to the left of the film camera and this shot is almost, but not entirely, her point of view. Onscreen the photographer is installing his equipment while Maddalena keeps chattering. When she later says goodbye, the same mirror simultaneously shows another mother waiting offscreen with her daughter to be photographed (see Chapter 8 for the framing in this scene). Later, Maddalena injects one of her many local clients while we notice a door opening in the reflection of a cabinet mirror positioned behind her. She goes offscreen, enabling us to see in the reflection an ugly old woman entering with a huge tray of food while the on-screen 'patient' lies on her bed in the left foreground.

In *Rocco and His Brothers* mirrors are mostly found in the boxing impresario Morini's house. Morini pushes Rocco to sign a long-term contract, to compensate for a theft committed by his brother, Simone, and in the name of family honour despite his dislike of boxing (see Chapter 8 for the framing in this scene). Rocco

596 While McGregor himself stands up bare-chested shaving himself, the young Stone sits in a bathtub and is shown half naked on screen. McGregor throws Stone a blob of shaving cream in the face when he speaks too arrogantly. They can both laugh about it. Laughing de-eroticizes and ensures that we understand the scene as mere camaraderie. Nevertheless, the scene in which McGregor lights Forsythe (Franchot Tone) a cigarette in the prison, after they have been fiercely tortured, is quite suggestive. Soon after Stone, who has also been tortured, is brought inside, bare-chested. The *mise en scène* with the match is similar to that in *Ossessione* when Gino and the Spaniard share a bed in a hotel room and the latter looks longingly at the other by the light of a match. For the role of the Spaniard and the gender perspective in *Ossessione*, see Mauro Giori, *Poetica e prassi della trasgressione in Luchino Visconti, 1935-1962* (Milano: Libraccio, 2011), pp. 52-62.

597 Zagarrio (1996), p. 67-8. Zagarrio rightly indicates that *The Leopard* is full of multiplication of characters and extras by use of mirrors, in particular in the mirrored room of Palazzo Gangi used for the ball scene. Here a dialogue between Concetta and Angelica takes place, using mirrors to show Angelica's vanity and Concetta's rather dowdy look, starting with a *mirror shot* of Angelica. Afterwards Tancredi joins them, who proudly mirrors himself, while making clear that Concetta's romantic hero has turned into a reactionary. Finally, after Concetta has run away in tears, the mirrors reflect from above the serpentine movement of the quadrille that sweeps up Angelica and Tancredi. *Ibid.*, pp. 67-70. NB the scene is immediately followed by the scene with Don Fabrizio before the mirror. See above in this chapter.



Fig. 309-311. *Bellissima* (Luchino Visconti 1951).



Fig. 312-313. *Rocco and His Brothers* (Luchino Visconti 1960).



Fig. 314-315. *Vaghe stelle dell'Orsa* (Luchino Visconti 1965).

looks into a mirror while Morini stands offscreen though visible in its reflection. When he asks if Rocco will guarantee to pay him back, Rocco reacts fiercely to having his word doubted. Morini then calls the trainer, Cecchi (Paolo Stoppa). Morini's house is clearly full of art and antiques, making it odd why this rich man still needs more. When Rocco talks over the phone with Cecchi, the mirror shows not only Rocco's reflection but also that of Morini (offscreen) keeping an eye (and an ear) on whether the deal goes down. Visconti had earlier used mirrors to provide the viewer with information that is kept from the characters. Visiting the laundry where Rocco works, Simone asks for his trousers to be ironed. Via a dressing room mirror and a half opened curtain, the camera shows him secretly stealing a shirt, holding it proudly to his chest and hiding it in his gym bag. The staff does not see the theft.

In *Vaghe stelle dell'Orsa* Sandra talks with her husband, Andrew, via an antique mirror in her antique-laden bedroom. The furniture contrasts with Andrew's smooth modernity and indicates that Sandra lives in the present and in the past. At the end, when Sandra's brother, Gianni, commits suicide because his sister has rejected him sexually, we discover the corpse indirectly through the reflection in a mirror cabinet. The housekeeper Fosca (Amalia Troiani) is positioned left onscreen while to the right of the reflection – and so offscreen left – we see a doctor (Fred Williams) kneeling over Gianni's body. The indirect image of Fosca's cry echoes that of Livia's when seeing Franz on her balcony in *Senso*.

Death in Venice contains two meaningful moments of visual dialogue through mirrors. The first is a flashback to a Munich brothel. As Tadzio plays 'Für Elise' a little clumsily, Aschenbach thinks back to his youth, to the prostitute, Esmeralda (Carole André), who played the same piece fluently when he visited her. He enters the image from the left and sits down on a couch next to a prostitute. Above them hangs a large horizontal mirror showing the door of Esmeralda's room opposite. When Aschenbach enters her room, we see him go offscreen while he is visible in the reflection. A short time after – it is not clear whether they had sex – Esmeralda lies defiantly on the bed in her underwear, her hair untied, her mood underscored by an angled mirror above her. Ashamed, Aschenbach leaves money behind. Esmeralda tries to restrain him but he wants to leave quickly. She continues playing the piano. They exchange no words.

The second moment is Aschenbach's 'makeover' near the film's end. Like the old fop he met at his disembarkation in Venice – one of his many tormentors – the once rational and civilized composer loses all inhibitions in his pursuit of Tadzio. He permits an Italian barber (Franco Fabrizi) to dye his hair black, the latter flatteringly saying he is entitled to 'his natural colour'. The barber also trims Aschenbach's moustache, covers his face in white makeup and paints his lips red. Aschenbach has become a caricature of his younger self and a copy of the fop from the opening sequence. The barber sticks a pink rose in his buttonhole and concludes: 'Now, sir, you can fall in love!' The metamorphosis takes place partly as a mirrored reflection. We first see Aschenbach onscreen sitting in front of the barber's mirror before the camera while the barber stands right of him. The camera pans and zooms in on Aschenbach's reflection and he almost falls out of the frame while the barber is reduced to the mirror's reflection of his torso, emphasising his lesser importance. In a series of shots in which the barber



Fig. 316-323. *Death in Venice* (Luchino Visconti 1971).

comments on Aschenbach's neglect of his looks, the camera crosses the axis of action and alternates between medium close-ups of the barber and of Aschenbach, seen from the barber's left. The camera crosses the axis again and returns to its initial, distant position, zooming in on the barber's hands, pouring black paint in a bowl. Panning, the camera follows the hand with the bowl to Aschenbach's head and films the barber's painting his hair. The camera again crosses the axis to show the barber painting Aschenbach's moustache. Next, in a medium shot the barber looks at the composer's head and checks his result in the mirror (we see only his reflection, not Aschenbach's). We only see the back of Aschenbach's head. After a repeat of the medium close-up when Aschenbach's moustache is painted, the camera returns to its initial position, in which the barber walks to Aschenbach's left and trims the right half of his moustache. Visconti next cuts to a mirror shot of Aschenbach who comes forward to look at his half-cut moustache. The camera stands near to the position of the barber but at the height of his torso. Because the

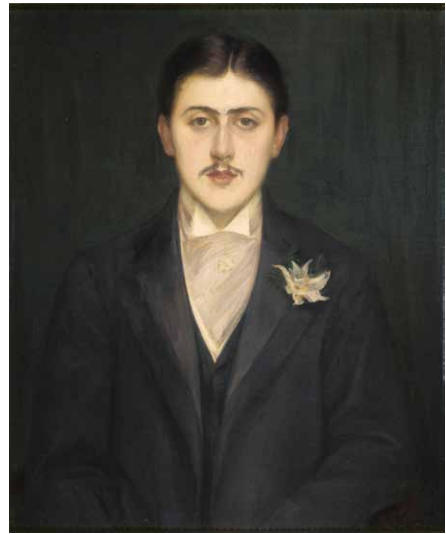


Fig. 324. Jacques-Émile Blanche, *Portrait de Marcel Proust* (1892). Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

bottom of the mirror is visible (out of focus), and because we know where the two men stand, we know that this *is* a mirror shot. We see the barber, Aschenbach, and their two reflections. The camera pans and follows the barber until he is behind his client, after which the camera zooms in again on Aschenbach's reflection while the barber whitens his face. Two extreme close ups follow in which Aschenbach has lipstick and mascara applied. In the penultimate shot we see the two men again onscreen in medium shot while we see their reflections in the mirror behind them. Finally, we notice Aschenbach in medium close up putting on his hat before the mirror and looking at himself, satisfied.⁵⁹⁸ With his painted face and trimmed moustache, Aschenbach becomes the equivalent of the portrait of Marcel Proust painted by Jacques-Émile Blanche (1892, Musée d'Orsay, Paris). So Proust returns here as well, even if as a caricature.

The cruel metamorphosis in *Death in Venice* is strongly reminiscent of the trenchant makeover scene in *Der blaue Engel*, discussed above, where the professor prepares before the mirror, is mocked by his wife and tormented by the director. This echoes Visconti's *Death in Venice*, where Aschenbach's decay is just as cruelly presented. As mentioned above, the once distinguished conductor and gentleman even allows his hair to be dyed and puts on heavy make-up out of love for his own Lola-Lola, Tadzio, with whom he associates the prostitute of his youth. In Visconti's film, Aschenbach is aware of his own ridicule as at one point he collapses laughing in a Venetian square. At the end of both *Der blaue Engel* and *Death*

598 Mann also describes this scene in *Der Tod in Venedig*: 'Cloaked in a hairdressing-gown, leaning back in the chair as the chatterer's hands tended him, he stared in dismay at his reflection in the looking-glass. "Grey", he remarked with a wry grimace. [...] And like a craftsman unable to finish, unable to satisfy himself, he passed busily and indefatigably from one procedure to another. Aschenbach, reclining comfortably, incapable of resistance, filled rather with exciting hopes by what was happening, gazed at the glass and saw his eyebrows arched more clearly and evenly, the shape of his eyes lengthened, ...

in *Venice* the heart of the protagonist breaks from physical exhaustion or from shattered love.⁵⁹⁹

In *Ludwig* the empress Elisabeth matches up her younger sister Sophie to King Ludwig II in order to end his infatuation with herself. She feeds her naïve sister the notion that Ludwig would fall deeply in love with her. Entering in a riding habit, Elisabeth sits down before a mirror where she lifts her hat and veil while talking to her sister – the lifting of hats and veils being a recurring motif in Visconti's historical films and often signalling plot transitions (for veiling and unveiling in Visconti's films, see Chapter 6). We see both Elisabeth and her reflection; Sophie is in frame right. Through the mirror Elisabeth talks with Sophie, not looking directly at her. Shortly thereafter, she sits before a vanity upon which are poised a large mirror and two smaller ones, so that Elisabeth's face appears in triple; as for her 'actual' self, we can only see her back. In the large mirror's reflection we see Sophie, who is offscreen. Her position within the frame symbolizes her lower social origins and secondary function in the narrative. She looks worried and anxious while Elisabeth delightedly and deviously spins the tale of Ludwig's love for her (see also Chapter 9).⁶⁰⁰ Later, several moments occur in which dialogues are expressed via mirrors, as in the scene where Ludwig crowns Sophie, the one with the stage actress, Lila von Buliowski (Adriana Asti) who defies Ludwig, and those with stage actor, Josef Kainz (Folker Bohnet) who recites dialogues from stage plays for Ludwig until he is exhausted. In addition, the focal length is sometimes altered during the shot (as in the scene with von Buliowski) so that the off-screen characters, only visible in the mirror's reflection, will be blurred, placing the emphasis on those in the foreground (*pulling* or *racking focus*). The mirror dialogue may also happen nonverbally, as towards the end of the film, when Ludwig is facing arrest in his own castle. We see him distraught at the window, while from its reflection looms the face of his faithful servant, Richard Hornig (Marc Porel).

Visual monologues and dialogues through mirrors in the silent era and the 1930s

From where do Visconti's visual monologues and dialogues through mirrors come? While early thirties German cinema has already been discussed, dialogue through mirrors was a recurring motif as early as the 1910s in European cinema, in particular in Danish, German, Italian, and Russian films. So the play with mirrors in film dates back to cinema's second decade or *transitional era*. In the Danish film, *Ved faengslets port* (*Temptations of a Big City*, August Blom, 1911), the viewer sees through a large mirror how a mother positioned in the background witnesses her

...their brightness enhanced by a slight underlining of the lids; saw below them a delicate carmine come to life as it was softly applied to a skin that had been brown and leathery; saw his lips that had just been so pallid now burgeoning cherry-red; saw the furry on his cheeks, round his mouth, the wrinkles by his eyes, all vanishing under face cream and an aura of youth – with beating heart he saw himself as a young man in earliest bloom'. Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice and other stories*, trans. David Luke (London: Vintage Books, 2010), p. 277. E-book edition. NB in the two last shots Aschenbach wears a different type of spectacles than the one he had at the beginning of the barber scene. The type reminds of the pair he wears as a younger man in the flashbacks.

599 See this chapter for the example in *Der blaue Engel*.

600 See before for the scene in which Sophie accuses Elisabeth of setting her up to get rid of Ludwig's love.

son trying to rob her, then repenting, and putting back the money. We see it, the mother sees it, we see that she sees it but the son has not noticed: the mirror thus creates suspense. Other examples include the mirror scenes in the early German crime film, *Die schwarze Natter* (*The Black Viper*, 1913). Here a detective exposes the true nature of the evil Ladya – the viper – through a mirror in his cap. At the end Ladya, dressed as ‘innocent’ bride, sees Blanche, her rival, who had been arrested through her machinations, popping up in the mirror of her dressing table, even before she faces her *tête à tête*. The shock is all the greater for it is as if Ladya has seen her own looming ghost rather than Blanche.⁶⁰¹ A variant of this is seen in *Die Augen der Mummy Ma* (*The Eyes of the Mummy Ma*, Ernst Lubitsch, 1918). Here the camera depicts a group sitting in front of a mirror: Ma (Pola Negri), a temple dancer, her lover Wendland (Harry Liedtke), and Fürst Hohenfels (Max Laurence). We see an off-screen door opening the background in the mirror. The Arab Radu (Emil Jannings) comes in, furious that Wendland has taken Ma from him. His eyes are full of hatred but Ma sees him after we do. She is startled, stands up, and collapses. Lubitsch is clearly playing with suspense: we know more initially than Ma and wait for her to discover the same menace.

In the Italian diva film, *Ma l'amor mio non muore* (*Love Everlasting*, Mario Caserini 1913), a life-size triple mirror in a dressing room is used initially for a visual dialogue and then for a monologue at the film's end. First we see Elsa (Lyda Borelli) reject a pushy suitor, who exits offscreen but remains visible through a large mirror where we see him turn around and raise his clenched fist. She sees it and shrugs. At the end of the film Elsa realizes all is lost and takes poison in front of the mirror, gazing at herself, and saying goodbye to her beauty.⁶⁰² Another example is the double mirror at the end of another Borelli movie: Nino Oxilia's *Rapsodia satanica*. Because mirrors are positioned in opposition to each other, it is difficult to establish what is a *mirror shot* and what is not. Angela Dalle Vacche writes: ‘When she returns to face the camera, the image of her back suggests the mental, and therefore insubstantial, nature of the barrier of an invisible fourth wall. By using the mirror to turn the body into a reflection, Oxilia underlines its illusionistic and constructed nature, hence its potential for collapse. Here the mirror is no instrument for narcissistic self-deception, but rather a means of a space that leads to a kind of magic realm beyond which it might be possible to be yourself and nothing but yourself’.⁶⁰³ But the greatest feats are saved for the mirror scenes in the Tsarist cinema of Yevgeni Bauer, such as a confusing shot with the mirrored wall in *Parizha korol* (*The King of Paris*, 1917).⁶⁰⁴ Here the mirror is larger than the film frame, so that it is not clear initially that we are facing a reflection. The characters in this reflection are just as clearly rendered as the ones onscreen so that both the characters and their reflections seem at times to be in the same ‘world’. Just like in *Der blaue Engel* characters go offscreen while

601 Heide Schlupmann, *Die Unheimlichkeit des Blicks. Das Drama des frühen deutschen Kinos* (Basel/Frankfurt: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, 1990), pp. 152-6.

602 Brewster/Jacobs, pp. 176-7.

603 Angela Dalle Vacche, *Diva: Defiance and Passion in Early Italian Cinema* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), p. 239.

604 Yuri Tsivian, ‘Portraits, Mirrors, Death: On Some Decadent Clichés in Early Russian Films, *Iris* 14-15 (Autumn 1992), pp. 67-83. For *The King of Paris/Korol Parizha*, see pp. 75-6.



Fig. 325. *Ved faengslets port* (August Blom 1911). Fig. 326. *Rapsodia satanica* (Nino Oxilia 1917).

their reflections continue to talk with those remaining onscreen. The viewer may initially believe that, say, only the left part of an image is a mirror wall, but when a man descends the stairs and proves to be a reflection, we realize the whole picture is a mirrored wall and are forced to reorient ourselves.

The Latvian film historian Yuri Tsivian speaks of a mania for mirrors in 1910s cinema.⁶⁰⁵ He considers it as proof that the European cinema of this era struggled with the medium's identity and was ultimately less inspired by theatre and more by painting. One means of conveying this turmoil was to demonstrate that the movie screen was closer to the canvas than to the stage. This was done by using mirrors that pointed towards the viewer. Where film pioneers such as Georges Méliès used 'blind' mirrors, painted on the walls, real mirrors facing the viewer were increasingly used from about 1910 onwards. At about this same time European set designers increasingly decided to abandon theatrical conventions in set design and opted instead for interiors based on realist paintings. This change also introduced the new concept of *backspace* (i.e. the imaginary space behind the spectator but part of the diegetic space, thus the space enclosed within the film's plot). Instead of denying that space, as in the theatre, filmmakers were determined to render it visible as in realist painting. Because theatre spectators had different viewpoints, playing with mirrors onstage was almost impossible but as film, like painting, shows only one point of view (the filmmaker's), mirrors could be used to deliver messages: this is not theatre but *cinema*, Tsivian stresses. The presence of the reflection within the diegetic space incorporated spectators within it and inside the action, creating the sense that they too assisted in the composition of the scene, just like painters did. To make the space more dramatic, doors could be opened outside the frame, though still visible through mirrors. Actors could enter and exit the picture past the camera and open doors in the mirrored reflections, which was impossible on stage. Tsivian describes it thus: 'To us, raised on dynamic

605 Yuri Tsivian, 'Two Stylists of the Teens: Franz Hofer and Yevgenii Bauer', in Elsaesser 1996, pp. 264-76. Also Kristin Thompson, 'The International Exploration of Cinematic Expressivity', in Karel Dibbets and Bert Hogenkamp, eds., *Film and the First World War* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995), pp. 70-5; and John Fullerton, 'Contextualising the Innovation of Deep Staging in Swedish Films', *ibid.*, pp. 86-96.

conceptions of cinematic space whereby heightened dramatic effects are associated with the increase in dissecting scenes [analytically], such shots may appear rather un-cinematic, even theatrical. However, from the point of view of the teens, shooting into mirrors must have looked perfectly film-specific, if only for the reason that none of these mirror effects could be produced on stage'.⁶⁰⁶

Using mirrors to enlarge the set and to situate a part of the action offscreen reappears in Visconti. In *The Damned's* opening scene, all the main characters are introduced as they prepare for Joachim von Essenbeck's birthday dinner. We see Essenbeck in medium shot (his head is still invisible) while kissing a picture of a pilot (see also Chapter 4 for photos within the sets of *The Damned*). Only afterwards does it become clear that this is probably his eldest son, who died as a pilot in the First World War. The camera then zooms out to reveal Essenbeck's head and a door in the reflection of a mirror. An old servant brushes his shoulders. Then the manufacturer exits offscreen but is still visible through the mirror walking towards the door. The camera zooms in on the mirror so that the door gets closer. The servant opens the door; Essenbeck gives him a small gesture of thanks before walking out. Essenbeck's gesture and departure is completely filmed in the mirror's reflection. Beyond this, Visconti uses mirrored doors in *Bellissima* and *Death in Venice* or the theatre box mirror in *Senso* in which we see the stage curtain rise.

In *Der letzte Mann*, Murnau uses an over-the-shoulder shot to film the hotel doorman standing before his mirror at home combing his hair. Once he removes his arms from his head, his mirror reveals his daughter (Maly Delschaft) taking two baking trays holding a wedding cake from the oven. It is her wedding day. The film contains other special 'mirror moments', mainly in the hotel restroom where the ex-doorman man is employed and where a huge mirror wall hangs above the sinks. Much of the narrative is told through the character's mirror images, while we often see only a shoulder or a hand during an over-the-shoulder shot and sometimes even nothing of the 'actual' character. Yet, Murnau intersperses mirror shots with those in which we see the real person, so there is no confusion between what is *virtual* and what is *actual*, in Deleuzian terms. In the reflection of the bathroom's mirror wall the doorman is seen sleeping standing up, much to one guest's amusement. We later see the doorman from the same perspective, just after he has been unmasked and humiliated, cleaning up, looking at himself in the mirror, and then looking up at the street. Although he is totally shattered, an arrogant hotel client still expects him to perform his duties. The third moment is when the ex-doorman/ washroom attendant has become a millionaire himself and goes to the bathroom after a copious meal. Like his former clients, he puts away his cigar and takes off his rings. Without rinsing his hands he embraces his successor and rubs his head full of soap. Then he bestows him with money and a cigar. The millionaire ironically offers a customer a towel but maintains the saucer for tips too. Murnau highlights the conditions of the underclass while rebuffing the upper class. In all these scenes, Murnau uses the mirror bathroom wall to play with the virtual and the actual.

606 Tsivian 1996, p. 280.



Fig. 327-329. *Der letzte Mann* (F.W. Murnau 1924).



Fig. 330-331 (left and middle). *La règle du jeu* (Jean Renoir 1939). Fig. 332 (right). *Mayerling* (Anatole Litvak 1936).



Fig. 333-335. *The Damned* (Luchino Visconti 1969).

Near the end of *Der letzte Mann*, the newly minted millionaire indulges himself in the hotel restaurant. His buddy the night porter enters, dressed in top hat and tails and loaded with parcels. A tilting mirror hangs in the background revealing the guests at different tables. In the background reflection we see the millionaire get up and walk toward his friend, coming onscreen and embracing the man. The shot is similar to the aforementioned scenes in *The Damned* and *Ma l'amor mio non muore*. Not only do we get more depth through the diagonal motion in the arrangement, but Jannings also stands out more than others in the background. By standing up and walking forward, he has stepped through a door in the reflection and into the film.

In contrast, we see little use of mirrors in American silent cinema, particularly mirror shots and visual dialogue by mirrors, except in the films of Erich von Stroheim. In *Foolish Wives* (1922), the villainous Count Karamzin (Stroheim) uses a pocket mirror to spy upon a wealthy American (Miss DuPont), who undresses after a downpour. By *pulling and racking focus*, the focus in the *mirror shot* changes from the spy to the object of his gaze. Mirrors clearly invite voyeurism. In *The Wedding March* (1928), the crippled millionaire's daughter, Cecilia Schweisser (Zasu Pitts), looks at herself in the mirror and checks her face, her beauty. We see a close up of the hand mirror containing her face, an obvious POV shot, as though we were looking in the mirror ourselves.

In *Breaking the Glass Armor*, Kristin Thompson relates the mirror scenes in Renoir's *La règle du jeu* to the conversation scenes where, in contrast to Renoir's tendency toward deep staging, the off-screen space is reduced (for Thompson and deep staging in *La règle di jeu*, see Chapter 7 and 8). Actually, she argues that the scenes that employ mirrors during dialogues are a kind of alternative *two-shots*. Renoir often portrays his main characters in dialogue scenes with two-shots. By showing all the characters at once, he reduces the accent on the off-screen space. Using the traditional *shot-reverse shot* technique, only one of the two characters is emphasized because the other stands – at least partially – offscreen. By not opting for his device, Renoir asserts that the characters are of equal interest. 'This is not to say that Renoir does not guide our attention within such scenes by means of movement, sound, and figure placement, but there are definitely many moments when such cues emphasize more than one character at the time'.⁶⁰⁷ At other times, when Renoir wants to separate two characters because they live in two different worlds, he uses shot-reverse shot editing, though it occurs less frequently than two-shots. The latter is more conducive to Renoir's realist approach – less visual control in order to stay closer to reality. As Thompson describes it: 'The simultaneous presentation of speech and reaction appeals to the notion of the simultaneity of events occurring in the array of the unbounded world'.⁶⁰⁸ This realist approach may explain Visconti's use of dialogue through mirrors as alternative two-shots, avoiding shot-reverse shot editing, and preferring the simultaneous presentation of speech.

As pointed out earlier, *La règle du jeu* was not the only film in which Renoir made mirrors part of the narrative. Renoir was also not the only film director in the 1930s to play with mirrors. In Litvak's *Mayerling*, in addition to the self-hating

607 Thompson 1988, p. 241.

608 Ibid., p. 242.

Rudolph destroying a mirror, another mirror reflects his – impossible – idyll with Marie Vetsera (Danielle Darrieux). The characters themselves are offscreen; the viewer only sees their mirrored reflection. Marie visits Rudolph for the first time at the Hofburg. She wants to take off her hat and Rudolph, quite remarkably, accompanies her to his bedroom. She removes her hat there in front of a mirror with a Rococo-like frame. Rudolph then appears behind her and for a moment they appear like a couple, a portrait of husband and wife, if only in the reflected reality of the mirror. In real life, they cannot marry because he already has a wife and child and can only be with a woman of his status. In another thirties film, Alexandrov's *Vesolye rebyata*, Anyuta cleans Yelena's home to prepare for the alleged composer's imminent arrival. Anyuta herself is in love with Kostya, who's actually only a singing shepherd, and sings in front the mirror while she cleans and wipes up dust that has settled into the shape of a heart. Kostya then arrives and is delighted to hear her singing, confirming their mutual interest (for mobile framing in *Vesolye rebyata*, see Chapter 9).

Shortly before Visconti made *Ossessione*, two films were released, *Intermezzo* and *Fari nella nebbia*, that play with depth and framing and use mirrors strikingly (for use of photography in *Intermezzo* see chapter 4, for deep staging in *Fari nella nebbia* see chapter 7). In *Intermezzo* the successful Swedish violinist Holger Brandt (Leslie Howard) has an affair with his daughter's talented piano teacher, Anita (Ingrid Bergman). They meet in a café but are afraid of being discovered. When they see each other in the café's mirror, they are suddenly a couple; their hidden reality intrudes in on them. In *Fari nella nebbia*, Anna (Mariella Lotti) has left her husband, Cesare, and has moved in with her mother. The latter upbraids her for going out too much though Anna refuses to listen. She wants to enjoy life and is dressing before the mirror (we see her reflection up front, herself from the back), pulling a coquettish little veil over her face (for (half)veils in film and art, see Chapter 6). In the lower left of the image a bouquet of flowers, shot out of focus, functions as *repoussoir* (for flowers as *repoussoir*, see Chapter 7).

The mirror as character

Two remarkable examples demonstrate the complexity and subtlety of Visconti's cinema as the mirror becomes a character in along with the protagonists. *Ossessione* contains a memorable sequence in front of a mirrored door as though it were choreographed. Visconti begins the scene with Giovanna's uncomfortable confrontation with her inner self. She is afraid of growing old and being stuck with her fat, rude husband for the rest of her life, so she develops a strategy. Next, a dialogue develops between her lover, Gino, and her in front of the mirror, while we see both their faces together (and not one either onscreen or offscreen, as previously). Gino looks lovingly at her though she appears determined while looking into the mirror, an expression that predicts the future – just as Cola's look does in *La terra trema*. Here Visconti convincingly shows the characters' psychology. While Gino is focused on the immediate task – lovemaking – she plans for the future: 'How do I get rid of my husband?' A man chases a woman until she catches him.

This may seem similar to Snyder's view (see above) on *femmes fatales* and mirrors in American *film noir*. Yet Giovanna is not a ruthless *femme fatale* like Barbara Stanwyck's Phyllis Dietrichson in *Double Indemnity* (Billy Wilder, 1944). Gilles Deleuze describes Giovanna's character as more of a sleepwalker: 'What first strikes the viewer is the way in which the black-clad heroine is possessed by an almost hallucinatory sensuality. She is closer to a visionary, a sleepwalker, than to a seductress or a lover (similarly, later, the Countess in *Senso*)'.⁶⁰⁹ One could claim that the poet of Cocteau's *Le sang d'un poète* returns here in a new guise. Giovanna too tries to penetrate through the mirror into another world but, unlike the poet, she cannot. Unlike her American counterparts, though, Giovanna stands out because of her great emotionality which acts to mitigate (somewhat) her calculating behaviour.

In this fascinating mirror scene with Giovanna speculating on murdering her husband and Gino thinking about sex, a third character emerges. While the two walk away and Gino embraces Giovanna who utters that 'something' needs to be done, we see their mirrored reflection while they are offscreen. If we were not paying attention, the scene would appear to be an actual, not a virtual, image. Without the other two noticing it, the mirrored door starts to open like a *deus ex machina*, like a curtain opening and like a *wipe* to the right (*Ossessione* contains several *wipes*). Our view of the couple is pushed aside. Clothes that clearly belong to Bragana, Giovanna's husband, appear. By shifting the emphasis from the two present characters to the *absent* one, who is still very much *present* through his clothes, Visconti foreshadows later events, even providing a dissolve to a shot of Bragana returning home on his bicycle, unsuspectingly.

In his last film, *L'innocente*, Visconti again creates another exciting confrontation with a mirrored wardrobe. On Christmas Eve, Tullio wants to kill his bastard son. He sends away the dry-nurse and promises to look after the child, but struggles to contain his hatred and resentment.

When the dry-nurse takes a shawl from the closet, she leaves the door open so that Tullio, frozen, sees himself reflected in the mirror, with the crib to his right and a portrait of Christ in the middle between the two of them. It could not be more symbolic: Tullio next to the innocent but hated child, separated from each other by a painting that represents the faith that made his wife decide not to have an abortion. As in *Ossessione*, the mirror offers a kind of moralistic judgement. But could we flip this around? Perhaps the mirror is rather the evil genius that encourages Tullio to fulfil his criminal act?⁶¹⁰ This brings us back to the magic powers attributed to mirrors in former ages. Indeed, mentioning the examples above from *Ossessione*, *Senso*, *Vaghe stelle dell'Orsa*, and *L'innocente*, Youssef Isaghpour has

⁶⁰⁹ Deleuze 2005, *Cinema 2*, p. 3.

⁶¹⁰ In the novel, neither the mirror nor the portrait of Christ play a role in this scene, so these were additions by Visconti and his crew. In the scene Visconti synthesizes the situation through a constructed trinity. Earlier in his novel, though, D'Annunzio has a mirror play an important role. His wife has confessed her adultery, wants to commit suicide but Tullio prevents her – partly because of their two daughters, who are not in the movie. He accepts the bastard child. They sit on a couch in front of a mirror cabinet. In the dim light Giuliana's reflection reminds Tullio of old ladies' portraits – D'Annunzio always loved to compare the women in his novels to art works: 'On the vague surface ...



Fig. 336-347. *Osessione* (Luchino Visconti 1943).

written that Visconti's relationship with the mirror is like his relationship with the camera, 'an omnipresence of the look and also a presence of death'.⁶¹¹

Visconti used mirrors in multiple ways: to create space and to retain the unity of place in his scenes. But he also used them to create visual dialogues and, on a metaphorical level, to create discomfort and moral 'reflection'. Visconti's striking and frequent use of mirrors certainly has links with their use in visual art, in silent cinema and that of the 1930s and early 1940s, in the latter case during his formative years and just before he embarked on his career. Visconti's use of mirrors help to elucidate his film's content and form. According to Mario Garbuglia, Visconti's regular set designer, and Caterina D'Amico, guardian of the Visconti legacy and curator of several exhibitions and publications on him, Visconti's use of mirrors was purely aesthetic.⁶¹² This chapter makes clear, however, that there was more to it than pure visual appeal. The reflection of the mirror might be less transparent than it may appear to be at first glance. Or like Jean Cocteau once said: 'Mirrors should reflect a little before throwing back images'.⁶¹³

As in paintings by the seventeenth century Dutch artists Vermeer and De Hooch, or nineteenth century works by Degas, Visconti recognizes that the off-screen world exists – the world does not end at the edge of the frame. In her study *Moving Pictures*, Anne Hollander argued that Northern European painting prefigures cinema as a kind of film before film. Despite the teleology of her work, her study gives us a broader and more intermedial look at cinema, especially with regard to the investigation of light and space, for example, in the decentred position of the character, the suggestion of the offscreen and the construction of the diegesis. In a sense, Visconti's cinema is the opposite of the European nineteenth-century panorama such as the Mesdag Panorama at The Hague, and as the French film theorist Jacques Aumont analysed it: yes, a 360-degree in the round but also an area that imprisons the spectator. You have to watch because you cannot look elsewhere. As Aumont characterizes the experience of cinema: once the light is switched off, you can only watch the screen.⁶¹⁴ Yet, this comparison does not hold when we watch the movie on the screen closely, because Visconti's images not only offer a multitude of signs but also because we often see a world that does not stop at the frame's edge. By tracking shots through spaces, by glances through open doors and windows, over stairs, and through hallways, by the light in background spaces à la seventeenth-century vistas and finally by the use of mirrors, we suspect that new spaces, new vistas, new details are hidden from view. Just as if we are Tancredi and Angelica roaming over the attics in the Salina palace, we discover new areas, secrets, and emotions. Or as Gilles Deleuze put it: 'The

of the glass I intently examined Juliana's silhouette, which, in its immobility, gradually acquired a mysterious aspect, the disquieting fascination of certain women's portraits obscured by time, the intensity of fictitious life, possessed by beings born of a hallucination. And, gradually, this distant image seemed to me more real than the living person. Gradually I saw in that image the caressing wife, the voluptuous woman, the mistress, the unfaithful one'. D'Annunzio (2009), p. 140.

611 Isaghpour 1984, pp. 35-6.

612 Interview with Mario Garbuglia, Roma, 30 October 1984; interview with Caterina D'Amico, Roma, 11 October 1984. D'Amico's *Album Visconti* 1978, pp. 149-155, shows several examples of mirror scenes in Visconti's films.

613 This line is spoken in Cocteau's film *Le sang d'un poète* (1930).

614 Hollander 1989, Aumont 1997.



Fig. 348. *L'innocente* (Luchino Visconti 1976).

character has become a kind of viewer. He shifts, runs, and becomes animated in vain, the situation he is in outstrips his motor capacities on all sides, and makes him see and hear what is no longer subject to the rules of a response or an action. He records rather than he reacts. He is prey to a vision, pursued by it or pursuing it, rather than engaged in an action'.⁶¹⁵

615 Deleuze 2005, *Cinema 2*, p. 3.

Conclusion

If one had to summarize this book with a single question it would be: from where does the imagery, the visual vocabulary and the pictoriality of Visconti's films come? Of course one may think of theatre, literature, music, of Visconti's own biography and of his views on politics and history. Here, however, I have made an intermedial comparison between Visconti's films and painting or other people's films prior to his film career, with a special focus on sets, costume, and cinematography.

The first section began with a chapter on a seemingly self-evident topic when considering an intermedial comparison of film and painting: the pictorial quotation. This was situated within a layered context of art historical and popular reputation and of Baxandall's use of the term, *appropriation*. The quotation becomes especially interesting when investigating 'image migration', the trajectory between 'original' and citation and in examining *how* the quotation is used. Analysing the citation from Hayez's painting of *Il bacio* in Visconti's *Senso* meant looking at the shifting reputation of painter and painting and the role of art critic Emilio Cecchi, but also research into how Visconti's ironic, almost parodic variation on the original, elevated the painting's significance.

Combining original research with interviews with set and costume designers, I concluded that set and costume design, was a prominent factor when dealing with the multi-layered roots of Visconti's imagery. This led to chapters on the use of painting and photo portraits in Visconti's sets (in which photography also received some attention), the documentation for Visconti's film costumes and its references to painting and photography, and the painterly and film-like context of the use of such garments as veils. Paintings and their titles were adapted to the films' narratives: Greuze's *Le fils puni* in *The Leopard* and the conversation pieces in *Conversation Piece*. Certain types of art (academic painting, genre painting, and artistic photography) appeared to be more related to specific films than those previously mentioned by critics (*Senso*). Despite the huge photographic documentation at hand in preproduction, *Death in Venice* possesses a pictorial character in the end. References to painting in the novels adapted by Visconti (*ekphrasis*) was an important inspiration for the movies (*The Leopard*), but visual motifs in the films could also have literary roots too (*L'innocente*). Research into film costumes and sets with Visconti teaches also about the working methods of the director *and* those of his staff.

After examining different kinds of appropriation in costume and set design, the second part of this book was dominated by an intermedial and intertextual analysis of Visconti's imagery in terms of *staging* and *framing*. Transmedial comparison of film with painting is combined with media archaeology or *parallax historiography*.

Cinematography, coupled with *mise en scène*, prevails. Thanks to Stoichita's *The Self-Aware Image*, which analysed framing and depth in early modern painting, and to film studies scholars (Aumont, Bazin, Bellocchio, Bordwell, Brewster and Jacobs, Campari, Costa, Deleuze, Doane, Elsaesser, Païni, Salt, Thompson, Tsivian, and Zagarrío), Visconti's use of depth was connected not only to figurative painting (both of the early modern era and the nineteenth century), but also to earlier cinema, such as the silent film, European and American film of the thirties and Renoir in particular. This study paid particular attention to sound films of the thirties and early forties, not just Hollywood and Renoir, but also the – previously 'damned' (i.e. Fascist) – Italian cinema from the same era, as well as early Soviet sound cinema. When looking at staging, framing and mobile framing, Visconti's imagery had fruitful soil in those of his predecessors, though this is not to write him off as a mere 'calligraphist'. As the introduction asserted, the time is now ripe to make a formal comparison between Visconti's films and those of his predecessors, even when they are not named Renoir, but Koch, Ophüls, Alexandrov, Franciolini, or Righelli. This way, one can also see that some narrative choices (delayed introduction of characters), stylistic choices (filtering or blocking of characters), motives (an opening or closing shot with a look at the road), and technological interventions (wipes, crane shots, mirror shots, deep focus, live sound recordings) do not exclusively belong to the vocabulary of a single director, but are popular within a decade, a national context or an artistic environment. And, again, they may say a lot about Visconti's collaborators too.

The book's second section also showed where the cinematic medium crosses borders as, within the staging of depth, the echoes of the film frame by means of doors, windows, and mirror and picture frames. Visconti applies a striking use of vistas through open doors, which not only harks back to the early modern painting of De Hooch and Vermeer, but already stands out with pre-Visconti filmmakers like Renoir and Ophüls. Those vistas, often linked to deep staging and mobile framing, are closely related to Visconti's motif of the explorer: the protagonist who explores the unknown space as a stand-in for us, the spectators. Therefore Visconti always creates the first and third person at the same time, showing a character with whom we identify on one hand, and whom we observe on the other hand as Letizia Bellocchio has argued. The frequent motif of the person filmed from the back (whether a lead or an extra), also contributes to that feeling. As mentioned in the introduction, Visconti frequently uses what Wolf calls '*intratextual* framings, i.e. all elements within the "main" text that signal particular cognitive frames which are relevant to the reception of the work (or parts of it) under consideration'.⁶¹⁶ Indeed, Visconti's double framing or sometimes even his *mise en abîme* by doors, windows, and mirrors may be denominated as *intratextual*. By their literal framing, they also steer our interpretation. All these motifs are clearly *transmedial*, according to Irina Rajewsky's definition, 'the appearance of a certain motif, aesthetic, or discourse across a variety of different media'.⁶¹⁷ Visconti's uses of the door, the window, and the mirror as motifs have their pedigree in earlier cinema, but also in early modern and nineteenth century figurative painting.

616 Wolf 2006, p. 20.

617 Rajewsky 2005, p. 46.

One also notices *ontological* differences in Visconti's treatment of depth, such as the filtering or temporarily *blocking* our view of the characters, a typical cinematic motif that, apart from Degas, rarely occurs in painting. Painting, just like film, can evoke a *panoramic* sensation by size or composition. Still, film shows the panorama literally, through a *panshot* or a *tracking shot*, whether or not combined with *zoom* and often filmed in *long take*. Indeed, Visconti's mobile camera tells you constantly when you want to compare film with painting: yes, you can, but only up to a certain extent. This also applies to the last chapter of this section: the use of mirrors. Surely, mirror scenes also occur in Hollywood movies, especially from the forties, but within the context of Visconti they prove to have a much longer European pedigree. Mirrors often create awkwardness in his films, by confronting the person with him- or herself, or with the Other, who stands offscreen but is visible onscreen by reflection. These typical visual dialogues using the mirror, for which we have counterparts in painting but not in theatre, go back to older European films from the silent or the early sound eras in which *mise en scène* dominated over editing, and in which mirrors were used like a kind of *interior editing*, just like with *deep staging*.

In general, the effects or possible effects of previous (French, Italian, etc.) films on Visconti's films are best described as *media archaeology* or *parallax historiography*. We might also call it *intertextuality*, because films are connected with other films (there will be no change or difference in the medium). On the other hand the cinematic techniques of framing, mobile framing and mirroring seem to go beyond and indicate an *ontological* variant of intermediality, such as Schröter describes, or *re-mediation* as Bolter and Grusin use the term, indicating the transfer of techniques from another medium (painting) to the medium of film. Many visual techniques, stylistic forms of framing and *mise en scène* simply originate in the visual vocabulary of painting. The currently fashionable term of *crossmediality* doesn't add anything, just the crossing of the medium's borders. It seems to be a neutral term, though it says nothing about the relationship between the media concerned. Usually, however, such a process is not neutral because one medium mostly absorbs, reworks, and re-frames the other. This becomes clear in *remediation* where you look at and interpret these techniques in the first place from a technological perspective (or framing). Many of these techniques have been already used in painting as mentioned in the chapters on *repoussoir* and framing. Just as one may enjoy a computer game without being aware of how much of it is derived from classical narrative cinema and point-of-view cinematography, Visconti's films may seem transparent at first glance – but only at first. In the case of intermediality, one may also experience the media differences between the various components of media, where one medium is reflected from the perspective of another.

In addition to the inter-filmic media archaeology above, this study has dealt with intermediality in the sense of how cinema remediates painting, in which painting has been used as a model to create and to model images. But one may also research the role music plays in Visconti's films (which *has* also been examined) or how film remediates forms of literature and theatre, such as Visconti's relying on the nineteenth-century novel à la Balzac (which has been examined as well) and

his preference of the neoclassical unity of time, place, and action, derived from the theatre (analysed in this book). To respond to Brewster and Jacobs, I argue that in film, composition has ties not only with painting but also with a specific theatrical form of painting, or vice versa with a tableau-like style in the theatre. Setting is therefore very important and you can see it clearly in Visconti, whether in actual locations or studio sets. Of course, the whole classical narrative cinema leans heavily on literature and theatre, but possibly it is there that Visconti deviates from the classical style by deliberately stressing those pictorial and theatrical roots. Further research on this subject, however, I will leave to someone else. This also applies to Visconti's and his collaborators' remarkable use of colour and chiaroscuro, to which a small number of publications has been dedicated.⁶¹⁸

Through his interactions between strong narrative cinema conventions and the sophisticated ways that he 'pushes' his images towards intermediality, i.e. the way he involves other media, Visconti adds exciting and important overtones to the filmic image. This form of intermediality may be less provocative and less reflexive, in the sense that Visconti's films do not directly reflect on film language. Instead of the forced analysis of Jean-Luc Godard, Visconti's film world seduces in a synthetic, inimitable, and sensual way.

Initially, this manuscript contained a third section on the cinematic context of Visconti's *Bildungsjahre* in Paris and Rome between the mid-thirties and early forties in order to explain his artistic 'crust'. For this I did extensive research in Paris and Rome, e.g., on Visconti's earliest film projects, his dabbling with Paris's avant-garde, the supply of films in Paris in 1936 (the year Visconti worked for Renoir), the precise contacts with Renoir during *Une partie de campagne*, the *Tosca* project, and a comparison of *Ossessione* with Renoir's *La bête humaine* and Chenal's *Le dernier tournant*. Eventually, this became too unwieldy and too fixated on the style of Visconti's earliest films. It will be published separately. Visconti's striking deep staging, framing and mobile framing not only have their predecessors in Renoir's cinema but also in the musicals by Alexandrov, the melodramas by von Sternberg and Dietrich, Italian Fascist cinema and European silent cinema. Meanwhile, the relevance of Visconti's collaboration on *Tosca* for later films like *Ossessione* has been elaborated in separate articles in the volume *Tenöre, Touristen, Gastarbeiter. Deutsch-italienische Filmbeziehungen* (2011) and, even more so, in the journal *The Italianist* (2017).⁶¹⁹

Within Rajewsky's conception of *transmedial* intermediality⁶²⁰, she mentions 'the appearance of a certain motif, aesthetic or discourse across a variety of different media'⁶²¹, which well befits both sections of this book. The motif may be the painting as *memento mori*, veils, and (un-)veiling in the literal and figurative senses or the anonymous photographer in *Death in Venice*. It may also regard the motifs of human or floral *repoussoirs*, of the road, the visual exploration of garments, the backward

618 Cf. various essays in Michel Estève ed., *Luchino Visconti, l'histoire et l'esthétique*, Études cinématographiques 26-27 (3rd trimestre, 1963).

619 Blom 2011. Ivo Blom, 'Unaffectedness and rare eurythmics: Carl Koch, Jean Renoir, Luchino Visconti and the production of *Tosca* (1939/41)', *The Italianist*, 2. 2017, pp. 149-175.

620 See Introduction for Schröter and Rajewsky.

621 Rajewsky 2005, p. 46.

tracking shot to open a story, the arcing and forward tracking shots to explore spaces, and the motif of windows and mirrors to visually explore the space or to create confrontations between characters. For all of these we can create a *media archaeology* or *parallax historiography*, both within cinema and outside of it, in painting.

Yet, when we deepen our analysis and notice how Visconti uses doors like Johannes Vermeer or Samuel van Hoogstraten, but also uses the blocking of our view by placing characters between our eyes and the background persons, we notice differences between his cinema and this kind of painting – not *any* kind of painting, if we take into account Degas's work, for instance. But this blocking brings us closer to earlier, intra-medial examples in cinema itself, i.e. thirties films and in particular those of Jean Renoir. Mobile framing indicates where the cinematic motif of the door opening becomes definitely different from that of painting. We start with formal resemblances then, but when deepening our case, we notice differences that refer to a filmmaker's personal aesthetics and that help us to recognize medial differences. Coming back to Wolf, his focus on framing is an important exercise in defining what frames and framing mean, but it needs a complementary perspective because of the counterexamples in which borders constantly change. And even more, when the camera moves, and starts to deny any borders (at least, within the diegesis), we constantly need to adjust our cognitive framing and *re-frame* our view of the setting, the characters, and the plot.

To conclude: researching where Visconti's spectacular images and pictoriality come from requires a pluriform, multi-layered approach. Not only because the visual roots can be found in visual arts like painting and cinema, but also because the intervisual relationships manifest themselves in so many ways: either invested by Visconti and his collaborators (citations, paintings in sets, use of visual art for documentation, and artistic inspiration of sets and costumes), or, in hindsight, because of scholars' and critics' (like myself) interpretations and our frames of reference, drawing links between Visconti's staging and framing and film and art history writ large. In line with New Historicism and New Film History⁶²², I am well aware of my own frames of reference and limitations. Still, I hope this study sheds new light on the monumental film oeuvre of Luchino Visconti.

622 James Chapman, Mark Glancy and Sue Harper, eds., *The New Film History: Sources, Methods, Approaches* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). See also Elsaesser 2004.

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FILM AND ART

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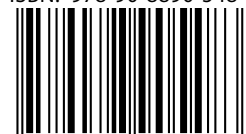
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