

**Cultural Vocabularies of Eating and Mourning
in Southern Italy:**

**Reflections in Film of
Contemporary Eating Disorders
and Historical Traumas**

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Chapter One

Introduction and Research Question

Few countries show greater disparity of development, and of eating disorder (ED) prevalence, than Italy. Although they are economically, politically, racially, and linguistically united, the South and North of Italy display drastically different cultures that have followed divergent trajectories since the end of World War II. While the North experienced rapid industrialization like other parts of Western Europe, the South remained embedded in traditional values and social roles. Throughout the twentieth century, the South was characterized by many features of an underdeveloped economy, including overpopulation, high birth rate, and traditional agricultural and land tenure systems (Clark 1984; Smith 1997). The economy of the South continues to lag behind that of northern Italy and the rest of Western Europe; according to the International Standard of Poverty Line at the Italian National Statistical Institute, 70 percent of Italy's poor families live in the South. Further, the South experiences unemployment four times greater than that of the North, as well as higher rates of political corruption and organized crime (Ruggiero, 2003).

Given these sociocultural and economic characteristics, it would be reasonable to expect northern Italian populations to show higher prevalence of anorexia nervosa (AN), bulimia nervosa (BN), and other eating disorders. This follows basic observed trends concerning ED prevalence. Generally uniting the distinct geographic and cultural locations in which ED are observed is that they fit one of two sets of conditions: either they host the highly developed and industrialized economy with which ED are popularly associated, or they are witnessing rapid market changes that impact the status of women in society (Gordon, 2003). The Southern

economy is neither highly industrialized nor going through rapid market changes like its Northern counterpart, making high rates of ED much more likely in the North than in the South.

Despite the fact that it meets neither of these economic conditions, southern Italy actually exhibits remarkably higher prevalence of the full spectrum of ED compared to the North. AN, BN, and the catch-all “eating disorders not otherwise specified” (EDNOS) all occur in southern Italy at rates higher than those observed in northern Italy and other Western European countries. A group of landmark epidemiological studies of eating behaviors, body image phenomenology, and the prevalence of ED in Italy in the late 1990s established this finding: the highest prevalence was found in the South (Dalle Grave et al., 1997; Cotrufo et al., 1998), with the lowest prevalence occurring in the North (Santonastaso et al., 1996). The prevalence of AN, BN, and EDNOS, respectively, were found to be 0%, 0.5%, and 3.7% in the North (Santonastaso et al., 1996). Cotrufo et al.’s (1998) finding of 0.2% for AN, 2.3% for BN, and a startling 10.7% for EDNOS in the South pointed to notably higher rates. Later studies confirmed these trends.

The puzzle of such high ED prevalence in southern Italy is compounded by South-specific symptoms and determinants of ED. Clinical, academic, and popular discourse around eating disorders (ED) in the United States strongly associate conditions like AN and BN with mass media images and a collective “drive for thinness” or “fat phobia,” especially among young, white, affluent females. Even the current, fourth edition¹ of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) published by the American Psychiatric Association cites “intense fear of gaining weight or becoming fat” and “self-evaluation...unduly influenced by body shape and weight” as necessary diagnostic criteria for AN and BN (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). The application of this characteristically Western interpretation of disordered

¹ The new fifth edition of the DSM, the DSM-V, is scheduled to be released in late May 2013.

eating behavior to societies outside of North America can lead to problematic conclusions that ignore other cultural factors contributing to the development of ED.

The characteristics of ED in southern Italy, in contrast, illuminate the multiple dimensions of a psychopathology popularly attributed simply to physical self-assessment. Southern Italian women are actually less sensitive to mass media body ideals and more satisfied with their body image than their Northern peers. Instead, southern Italian women report low self-esteem, high degrees of maturity fears, and difficulties in interoceptive awareness—that is, feelings of uncertainty when interpreting feelings of hunger and satiety (Ruggiero and Prandin, 2002; Ruggiero et al., 2000). High rates of perfectionist tendencies (also expressed as a sense of self-ineffectiveness), along with an extreme need for control, dominate this epidemiological picture (Ruggiero 2000). Overall, the profile of ED in southern Italy suggests that low self-esteem and related concerns present just as powerful psychological determinants for the development of ED as the mass media-driven body image problems associated with ED in more industrialized populations.

The high prevalence of ED and the unique composition of psychological determinants in southern Italy point to a compelling paradox: *Given the widely supported theory that the development of eating disorders in a population may be ascribed not only to media-stimulated body image concerns but also to processes of modernization and industrialization, why do women in southern Italy, which has not conformed to or successfully undergone these processes, exhibit relatively high rates of eating disorders?*

In response to this question, I argue that ED in southern Italy can be understood as a symptom of transgenerational transmission of trauma related to the Southern experience of WWII. This examination of ED in southern Italy is intended to expand the present body of

knowledge by illuminating significant, though less often discussed or examined, risk factors for ED. The greater question of why ED are experienced predominantly by women, both in southern Italy and in other global settings, is outside the scope of this argument. However, the exploration of psychoanalysis, trauma, film, and history—and the gendered dimensions implicit in each—in this thesis gives rise to informative questions about gender and ED. This research provides grounding for a culturally sensitive approach to gender in the historical realm of trauma as well as in the universal epidemiological disparity in ED. Above all, this research relies on the central tenet that disordered eating is not a monolith with one singular, universal cause. Rather, the focus is on just one of the many cultures that hosts this cross-cultural expression of individual distress. By focusing on the collective, historical aspects of ED etiology in the southern Italian setting, the argument above strives to contribute to understanding of the disparate conditions and causes of disordered eating.

Chapter Two provides a detailed explication of this argument. The literature review in Chapter Three provides the background necessary to situate this argument and my proposed film analysis methodology in current discourses on Italian WWII history, trauma theory, and film studies. Chapter Four describes the specific film analysis methodology—*anasemic reading*—employed in this project’s data analyses. Next, Chapters Five, Six, Seven, and Eight each analyze one of the four films that comprise the data set for this thesis: Ettore Scola’s *La Famiglia*, Giuseppe Tornatore’s *Cinema Paradiso*, Francesco Rosi’s *Tre fratelli*, and Mario Martone’s *L’amore molesto*. Finally, Chapter Nine reviews this thesis’s conclusions and suggests further possibilities for research concerning collective trauma, history, and ED.

Chapter Two

Argument

This thesis argues that ED in southern Italy are a symptom of transgenerational transmission of trauma related to the collective Southern fear of the end of WWII and the loss of the precarious economic certainty associated with the Allied occupation. This fear and eventual loss could not be openly mourned because of its conflict with the northern Resistance myth that sustains WWII memory in the popular Italian national narrative. The specific ED pathology present in contemporary southern Italy emerged from this Southern experience of unspeakable WWI losses and their incomplete mourning across generations.

As discussed in the introduction, southern Italian populations paradoxically report less sensitivity to mass media body ideals and more satisfaction with their image than those in the North. Instead, ED in southern Italy is characterized by low self-esteem, high emotional confusion, social insecurity, and pathological perfectionism. This suggests that ED in southern Italy stems from a disorder of self-esteem and self-worth, rather than a disorder only of physical self-assessment (Ruggiero & Sassaroli, 2002). Gordon (2003) and others observe that ED do not necessarily express themselves only in terms of weight and body image concerns, but rather “can draw on a variety of cultural vocabularies to express...underlying psychosocial conflicts” (p. 3). To address the puzzle of ED in southern Italy, then, these South-specific “cultural vocabularies” of ED must be placed in the context of the familial environments and generational culture clash from which they stem.

Familial relationships and parenting styles are widely considered important components in the development of ED (Ruggiero, 2002). In southern Italy in particular, where the family is

traditionally the principal social group, the interactions between characteristically distrustful and directive parenting and opposing modern social expectations seem to predispose subjects to develop psychic pathologies such as ED via painful familial experiences (Ruggiero, 2003). Attendant to this parenting style is criticism, conflict, frustration, and stress in familial environments. Parental criticism, especially in its role as a trigger of low self-esteem and perfectionist tendencies, figures heavily into ED psychopathology (Keel & Klump, 2003.) The evolving generational and cultural clash between “modern” and traditional values, a widespread characteristic of southern Italy since WWII, exacerbates this intrafamilial conflict. The determinants of ED in southern Italy reflect this relational pattern of parental criticism as well as the sociocultural clash associated with parental traditionalism.

This intergenerational tension traces its deeper origins beyond contemporary socioeconomic conditions, however, to the incomplete individual and collective mourning of Southern wartime trauma. The experience of WWII in southern Italy, especially in the period from 1943 to 1945 after Italy switched its allegiance from the Axis to the Allied powers, was economically and politically distinctive from that in the North. While the Northern experience was characterized by Nazi occupation, the Southern experience was dominated by Allied liberation. The arrival of the Allies in Sicily and the mainland South in 1943 brought an improved economy to the impoverished South, but this new sense of economic prosperity was lost with the end of the war in 1945. Further, the South was geographically excluded from the North-based Resistance movement that finally defeated Mussolini and the Fascists and ended Italy’s war in 1945 (Morgan, 2007). Over time, the story of the Resistance became Italy’s dominant national narrative of victory, redemption, and political founding. Without involvement in the Resistance movement itself, however, Southern populations were isolated from this

national myth. Thus, for Southerners, to celebrate the end of the war was to superficially identify with the far-removed northern Resistance movement—but to mourn the end of the war was to betray their own country.

This deep conflict in the Southern experience of WWII renders the Southern memory of WWII collectively unspeakable. Without inclusion or integration in the Italian national narrative of WWII, the South is precluded from openly grieving or mourning the South-specific losses of the war. Thus the historical trauma of WWII in the South cannot be communicated to younger generations through words and stories, but instead permeates familial interactions through the silent transgenerational transmission of trauma. This transgenerational transmission of trauma provides the link between the South's particular historical trauma of WWII and the South's particular contemporary ED pathology. ED in Southern Italy is a result of the internalization of the patterns of this treatment from parents. Disordered eating in the southern Italian context is best understood, then, as an expression of intrafamilial hostility resulting from chronic historical grief. Thus the cultural vocabularies of consumption that form the patterns of ED in Southern Italy emerge as a response to and reflection of Southern cultural vocabularies of mourning.

Chapter Three

Literature Review

This thesis understands ED in southern Italy as a psychopathologic response to southern Italy-specific WWII traumas, and posits that this aesthetic is reflected in contemporary southern Italian film. Due to the multidisciplinary nature of the study of ED development and prevalence, this literature review will draw from diverse fields including history, trauma theory, psychology, cultural studies, psychoanalysis, and film studies. First, I will examine historical perspectives on WWII in southern Italy, aligning this project with historian Philip Morgan and his work on the common “lived” experience of trauma during the war. Next, I will review the body of literature surrounding the transgenerational transmission of trauma. In this section I will bring together trauma theory and the work of Christopher Bollas to establish a structure within which to understand both ED and film as responses to traumatic transmission from parents. This will be followed by a discussion of film as an object of analysis (specifically as encrypted pathology) and of the unique place of film in Italian culture. This section is intended to justify the selection of film as the data set for this thesis.

Historical perspectives on trauma in the southern Italian experience of World War II

Following a trajectory similar to that of the rest of Europe, Italy experienced a notable and rapid increase in cases of ED immediately after WWII (Ruggiero, 2002). Thus, in order to establish the connection between contemporary ED prevalence and the transgenerational transmission of trauma in southern Italy, this phenomenon must first be historicized in southern Italians’ traumatic experience of WWII and its aftermath. Drawing on Phillip Morgan’s (2007) historical study on the Italian experience of WWII, this section will elaborate the particular

southern Italian WWII traumas proposed to be sources of contemporary ED pathology.

Morgan's (2007) *The Fall of Mussolini* offers an examination of the popular and lived, rather than political or elite, experience of WWII in Italy. Morgan presents the text as an examination of "how people responded to and coped with the extraordinary pressures of wartime living, and the invasion, occupation and division of their country by warring foreign powers," stating that he aims to accomplish this through a study that is "as bottom-up as it can be" (p. 10). The text presents little new historical research and instead relies on secondary works and published memoirs. While this unique strategy is one of the book's greatest strengths, Morgan's citations conspicuously lack reference to the vast number of war and resistance memoirs and oral testimonies stored in Italian local and communal archives. This criticism notwithstanding, reviews seem to agree that *The Fall of Mussolini* is an impressive and innovative work of historical synthesis, and one of the most detailed and thorough overviews of Italy's experience of WWII available to English audiences (Strang, 2009; Finaldi, 2009; Corner, 2010; Carter, 2008).

Compared to Clough's (1964) economic history, Clough and Saladino's (1968) later general history, or Clark's (1984) "definitive" history of the formation of the nation and other historical texts like it, Morgan's historical account revolves around themes of collective—and selective—memory: specifically, the "continued and *unresolved* conflict among Italians over Italy's Fascist and wartime past" (p. 9, emphasis mine). In an effort to explain how this "history still...matters to how Italians see themselves more than sixty years after the end of the Second World War" (p. 9), Morgan proposes that Italians collectively choose to remember the years 1943 to 1945, characterized by the anti-Nazi and anti-Fascist Resistance movement, and to forget the years 1940 to 1943, characterized by Mussolini's popularly supported Fascist war. In the context of a war in which Italians were the perpetrators of Fascist violence and warfare, the years

from 1940 to 1943 were ones of “almost continuous military defeat” and “national humiliation felt by all Italians” (p. 34). After the armistice of 1943, in contrast, Italy joined the Allies and “the nation led to ruin and defeat by Fascism...remade itself in the glorious resistance to and liberation from Nazi occupation” (p. 35).

In a later article, Morgan (2009) argues that this state-sponsored revision of public memory serves to soften the blow of an “unpalatable past” (p. 220), but also prevents “national recovery and reconstruction, and indeed the capacity to move on at all” (p. 219). Pezzino (2005) echoes this idea, recognizing the tension between the official narrative and the conflicting “varieties of hitherto unmentionable” WWII recollections (p. 396). Similarly, this thesis will argue that internal conflicts, and resultant shame and guilt, on both the individual and collective levels prevent the reconciling or mourning of personal traumas.

Morgan’s methodology relies on the validity of the appropriate contextualization of individual recollections. In analogy to the validity of film—the data set with which this thesis is concerned—as historical and cultural artifact, Morgan (2009) explains:

Memories may not be totally “accurate” or “correct” in their recording of past events. But they introduce a necessary element of subjectivity, because they represent events as lived experience, and they reveal something of the motivation for actions, the mentality, culture, and values of the people doing the remembering. This, in my view, makes memories more authentic than accurate, much as a historical film may get the “facts” willfully wrong, and yet convey an emotional “truth” about the past. (p. 224)

These dimensions of Morgan’s theory of collective memory make his work an ideal historical guide for research concerned with the connection between historical and contemporary traumatic conditions.

Similar to other historians of Italy, Morgan identifies a collective shift in gender roles resulting from the booming wartime economy and mass post-war emigration as a source of

wartime trauma. In general terms, such shifts in gender roles have a well-established role in ED development (Katzman & Lee, 1997; Lee, 1996; Keel & Klump, 2003). Morgan notes that the Allied troops' immense spending power fueled an economic phenomenon of "scarcity in the midst of plenty," which drove young women to enter prostitution out of familial economic necessity. After the occupation, the war-torn South experienced further gender role transition in the wake of a mass emigration of men in search of employment after the war. Between 1951 and 1961, estimates for the number of men emigrating from the South to the North range from 1.75 million to 3 million. Up to another 2.3 million left in the following decade, (Clark, 1984; Smith, 1997), leaving behind towns inhabited almost solely by women and children (Morgan, 2007).

This emigration coincided with the beginning of Italy's "economic miracle," in which "increased levels of urbanization, modernization, and marketization of the economy...with subsequent major changes to individual lifestyle, to traditional family structure, and to...national identity" brought about sudden changes in gender roles (Ruggiero, 2001, p. 124). This left southern Italy developed only "on the surface...identifying mainly with the consumer's values of Western democracy albeit lacking true means of production" (p. 121). In line with Katzman and Lee's (1997) work on the effects of cultural transition and disconnection, Ruggiero (2001) and other leading ED experts hypothesize that this post-war phenomenon of "consumerism without development" is at the root of the current disproportionately high rates of ED in southern Italy.

I recognize the validity of Ruggiero's hypothesis, but contend that the source of trauma most applicable to contemporary ED psychopathology extends back to wartime conditions themselves. While Morgan does not extensively explore the post-war "economic miracle" and its sociocultural implications, he does examine the wartime circumstances that directly preceded it and their inherent conflicts: namely, the positive effects of the wartime economy, and the South's

collective preclusion from the Resistance movement. More importantly, his account alone examines the subjective Southern *experience* of these conditions. Based on Morgan's evidence, I propose that WWII trauma in southern Italy—and thus contemporary ED pathology—are based in the conflict between the Southern experience of the Allied occupation and the national wartime narrative.

The Allies' presence fueled both a wide black market economy and significant inflation, which brought about a precarious but enhanced sense of economic certainty for Southern cities (Morgan, 2007). Clough (1964) extensively addresses inflation and its enduring post-war effects, but does not address its origins in the occupation. Southern Italian social and economic networks became so dependent on Allied occupation that, in 1945, an Italian visitor to Naples noted, "What people fear most is the end of the war" (qtd. in Morgan, 2007, p. 138). Local populations' favorable reception of the Allied troops in 1943—who represented at once the former enemy, the occupier, and the liberator—exacerbated Italians' sense of humiliation at having to admit defeat and change sides in the war. Thus, dismay at the Allies' departure at the end of the war, or the gaining of any advantage from their economic presence, was significantly at odds with the developing Resistance movement in the North. Any mourning of the loss of those economic conditions with the end of WWII was thus nationally inadmissible.

Compounding this irreconcilable conflict is the South's preclusion from the Resistance and, thus, from fully sharing in the founding political myth of post-war Italy. With the exception of Astarita (2005), who devotes one sentence to this event, Morgan (2007) is the only author reviewed here who extensively addresses it and its implications. In November and December 1944, over 200,000 Southern men who had been in the army at the time of the armistice (and the subsequent military disbandment) of September 1943 received "re-call up" papers announcing

obligatory re-enlistment in the armed forces. To Southern men who had just made their way home, the re-call up seemed “an act of revenge on men who were blameless, enacted by the men who were actually responsible for the national catastrophe” (Morgan, 2007, p. 161). The conscripted men refused to show in great numbers as what was called the “*non si parte*” (“nobody leaves”) campaign spread across the liberated South. This specifically Southern reaction to the armistice was in effect a refusal of the South to fight alongside the North, and ultimately to share in Italy’s war of national redemption.

Morgan (2007) establishes the Resistance’s place in the selective official Italian narrative of WWII—favoring the liberation struggle from 1943-1945 over the Fascist war from 1940-1943—that forms the core of his analysis. The Resistance was primarily a Northern phenomenon in opposition to the occupying German forces and their reinstated puppet Mussolini, but it nevertheless “came to see itself as the one single expression and symbol of national recovery and national redemption after [the armistice of] September 1943” (p. 159). Pezzino (2005) elaborates on the gap between reality and myth concerning the Resistance “in a country where few had known it directly” (p. 404). Indeed, not all Italians experienced or directly played a role in the Resistance; most of southern Italy was involved to a small degree, if at all. The political appropriation of the Resistance as the dominant symbol of the nation depicted “the struggle of an entire population to liberate the country” at the cost of “leaving in the shadows many of the complexities of behavior and social dynamics that characterized the lived experience of Italians during those years” (p. 397). In this way, the Resistance myth capably serves the purpose of obfuscating the “unpalatable” complexities of the Fascist war with the unifying idea of resistance against those same Fascists.

Because of a collective failure to take part in the national anti-Fascist movement to drive

the Germans out of Italy, the South could not claim membership in the Resistance, and thus could not grasp the pivotal aspect of the national reconciling WWII narrative. Instead, the South's 1943 to 1945 narrative is largely characterized by the Allied occupation and the mixed loyalties and shifting moral grounds associated with it. Attendant to this characterization is the reality that liberation and the end of Allied occupation did not bring about better conditions in the South. Social and economic conditions actually worsened in many areas of the South during the post-war "economic miracle" period. Fantone (2007) goes further to specify that only populations in the north and centre of Italy perceived increased economic security within two generations of WWII. In contrast to the myth of an inexorable drive toward redemption and unity between 1943 and 1945, the South's experience was one of precarious economic certainty and isolation from the Resistance, resulting in a collective inability to properly mourn the loss of the positive or hopeful aspects of wartime conditions.

Psychoanalytical framework and historical trauma

This thesis understands contemporary ED pathology in southern Italy as reflective of collective fears of the end of WWII and their conflict with the national narrative. I propose that this WWII mindset continues to influence the current generation through the transgenerational transmission of trauma. This section will review academic perspectives on trauma and its transgenerational transmission; outline the psychological theories of Christopher Bollas, with particular focus on the aesthetic of being and the search for the transformational object; and, finally, apply transmission theory and Bollas's constructs to the specific conditions of WWII in southern Italy.

Exposure to trauma is likely to cause a "rupture" in one's life, leading to a literal fixity (i.e. a state of being stuck) as well as to traumatic responses (Lev-Wiesel, 2007). While the

definition of the term “trauma” is a subject of debate, there is general consensus regarding characteristics of intensive stress, the psychological inability to cope with an event, and a cluster of symptoms including spontaneous re-experience of an event and behavioral and emotional withdrawal (Karenian et al., 2010). According to the DSM-IV, those who have experienced actual or threatened death or serious injury and have responded with fear, helplessness, or horror may develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms, including intrusion, detachment, avoidance, and hyperarousal (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Although the diagnostic category of PTSD only addresses individual rather than familial and social aspects of trauma, professionals and scholars nonetheless rely on it in analyzing trauma in historical and intergenerational contexts (Karenian et al., 2010; Evans-Campbell, 2008).

In the case of a mass traumatic event such as war or displacement, symptoms of trauma that appear collectively in one generation, and their distressing and disabling effects on personality and social interactions, may be indirectly transmitted to the next. This issue of the transgenerational transmission of symptoms of trauma took on unprecedented importance in the mid-1970s and 1980s, when the first major studies on the sequelae suffered by the offspring of Holocaust survivors began to emerge. With over 500 papers devoted to it, parent-to-child interaction following the Holocaust is the most comprehensively researched case of the phenomenon. Recent studies have utilized narrative analysis through interviews (Wiseman et al., 2006; Adelman, 1995) paired with questionnaires (Scharf & Mayseless, 2010), comparison of Holocaust survivors’ offspring to control groups (Sorscher & Cohen, 1997; Barel et al., 2010), clinical analysis (Gorden, 2011), and analysis in the context of immigration (Braga et al., 2012) and specific pathologies such as obsessive-compulsive disorder (Fonagy, 1999).

The methodologies developed in Holocaust studies offer frameworks within which to

approach trauma specific not just to concentration camp survivors, but also to other historical disorganizing experiences across cultural and social groups. In addition to studying Holocaust survivors, Lev-Wiesel (2007) establishes transgenerational traumatic responses across three generations following forced relocation in 1940s Israel and Palestine and post-WWII immigration from Morocco to Israel. Karenian et al. (2010) investigate transgenerational effects of the Turkish genocide in 1915, building upon Kupelian et al.'s (1998) work in which third-generation survivors of the genocide were found to exhibit more pathological symptoms than the second generation. Finally, Evans-Campbell (2008) establishes transmission among American Indian/Native Alaska communities with a multi-level framework of historical trauma. However, investigation of Australian Vietnam veterans (Davidson & Mellor, 2001), for example, has established no significant evidence of transgenerational transmission.

This wide-ranging body of work yields several conclusions relevant to the hypothesized connection between historical WWII trauma and contemporary ED psychopathology in southern Italy. Foremost among these is Lev-Wiesel's (2007) conclusion that:

Children are likely to take on certain emotional issues that originate in older generations in order to allow that generation to gain closure through them. Yet, certain issues within a family tend to be reproduced in younger generations sometimes out of lack of closure in the older generation. (p. 77)

This idea of "closure" invites analysis of trauma spanning up to three generations, implicating lingering lack of closure in the endurance of historical trauma. Scharf and Mayseless (2010) directly address the validity of analysis of the third generation, stating that the "frustration of the basic needs for relatedness, competence, and autonomy in parenting...plays a significant part in experiences of disorganization of self in the second generation, which then also influences the third generation" (p. 1550). Karenian et al. (2010) reinforce the suggestion that the degree of

trauma passed to the third generation and beyond is influenced by the level of secondary trauma experienced by the second generation.

Conclusions regarding gender are informative, albeit less established. For this study's focus on the drastically gendered phenomenon of ED, however, they must be recognized. Both Lichtman (1984) and Vogel (1994) address at length the gender of both parents and children in transgenerational transmission of trauma. In the context of Holocaust survivors in particular, Lichtman concludes that transmission from mothers and to daughters results in more pronounced symptoms of anxiety, paranoia, hypochondria, somatic complaints, and low self-esteem and ego strength than that from fathers and to sons. Lichtman points out that children receiving verbal and indirect information about trauma from their mothers "perceived their mothers—and by way of identification, themselves—as victims" (p. 921). Further, based on the symptoms listed above, Lichtman observes that the daughters in her study internalized trauma and guilt feelings much more than the sons.

Studies on the families of Holocaust survivors have also established the general impression that "those parents who survived the Holocaust by participating actively as partisans or as ghetto fighters were more likely to tell children about their experiences than those parents who were survivors of concentration and death camps" (Jucovy, 1992, p. 271). While both may present significant individual and collective trauma, this finding locates the roots of tacit transmission in traumatic experiences characterized by *shame* rather than pride or dignity. In the case of the Italian WWII experience, the South's collective refusal to re-conscript and join the resistance against the Nazis in September 1943 contrasts with the North's proud participation in the Resistance (Morgan, 2007). This failure to align with the Italian nation's redemption and liberation must be understood as a shameful South-specific facet of the nation-wide failure to

remember or articulate Italy's participation in the war as an ally of the Nazis between 1940 and 1943.

Regarding the exact mechanisms of the perpetuation of transgenerational trauma, Bradfield (2011) highlights the relational, rather than narrative, nature of transmission. These "patterns of relation" can include overprotectiveness, periods of silence or outburst, unexplained fears, and body language (p. 540). Bradfield contends that the traumatic "unformulated experience" in both parent and child relegates the secret of trauma to "an unspeakable place" (p. 547). Similarly, Braga et al. (2012) find that trauma is most evident in the offspring of survivors who rely on silence or indirect communication, pointing out that such absence of direct communication prevents offspring from achieving physical and biographical integration of their parents' or grandparents' traumatic pasts. In addition to "secrets, silence, and the unsaid," parental verbal communication in an "indirect, fragmented, or catastrophic manner" has been correlated with negative outcomes in offspring (Braga et al., 2012).

This theme of relational rather than narrative interactions, and the personal affect inherent in them, forms the basis of my approach to the collective and symptomatic reading of social interests. I do not aim to determine the prevalence of the clinical symptoms and disorders associated with ED, but rather to explore dimensions of the particular distress experienced at the intersection of historical and contemporary trauma. Guided by the notion of historical trauma as an explanatory and diagnostic concept, Bollas's theory of the aesthetic of being and the transformational object provides the foundation of my analytical strategy.

Bollas's (1987) theory, and my argument, revolve around the "traces in adult life" of the early relationship between "mother" and child (p. 2). In this context, the "mother" may be understood not just as the child's biological mother, but as any person(s) or environment(s) that

cares for and handles the child in infancy. By allowing the term “the mother” to be occupied by multiple and diverse figures, this study proposes to contour the gendered language of Bollas’s basic theory with specific questions of gender, class, and social dynamics.

Bollas asserts that an infant in the pre-verbal stage of development sees this mother not as a separate and independent object, but as a subjective *process* that alters the infant’s entire experience of reality. Actions such as feeding, diapering, soothing, playing, and sleeping all represent moments in which the presence of the mother is associated with the specific ways in which she transforms the infant’s reality: hunger becomes fullness, frustration becomes contentment, boredom becomes stimulation (Bollas, 1987). In these cumulative experiences of transformation, “whenever we desired, despaired, reached towards, played, or were in rage, love, pain or need, we were met by mother and handled according to her idiom of care” (p. 13). In this way the mother constitutes the infant’s total environment.

Through the transfer of both words and non-verbal cues from the mother to the infant, the mother informs what Bollas calls the infant’s developing “grammar” or “aesthetic” of being. These specific ways in which the mother is experienced as a transformational process constitute this aesthetic of being. Her “idiom of mothering” includes her particular “way of holding the infant, of responding to his gestures, of selecting objects, and of perceiving...internal needs” (p. 13). This idiom manifests in the mother’s body language, tone of voice, touch, etc. The infant internalizes such as “an experience of being rather than of mind,” without fully objectifying or representing the mother’s actions (p. 32). This aesthetic later informs the development of the ego with the acquisition of language.

In adult life this aesthetic of being is unconsciously experienced and sought after as an “aesthetic moment”: a form of *déjà-vu* in which one is exposed to a place, person, thing, or idea

reminiscent of the mother's handling aesthetic. In the midst of this aesthetic moment one is "reminded of something never cognitively apprehended by existentially known" (p. 16). This moment presents a symmetry between a pre-verbal, pre-representational ego memory of the mother as a transformational process and an equivalent *object* in adult life. Bollas identifies such transformational object-seeking as "an endless memorial search for something in the future that resides in the past" (p. 40). This search for the transformational object in adult life is a collective pursuit of symbolic equivalents to the mother's process of transformation and the experiences with which it is identified.

Thus Bollas's theory specifies how traumatic experiences in one generation, and later generations' internalization of the aesthetics of that trauma through transgenerational transmission, can lead to negative pathological results such as the development of ED. In addition to the examples of feeding and caring listed above, a person may seek transformational objects that recall internalized aesthetics of frustration, anxiety, or trauma. In terms of trauma, Bollas observes that those who experience trauma in infancy may "repeat traumatic situations...[to] remember their origins existentially" (p. 17) through the seeking of negative objects.

The traumatic southern Italian experience of WWII—as an aesthetic environment itself and as an influence on southern Italian mothers' idioms of care—contours Bollas's general theory. On the collective level, the experience of the conflict between relief and guilt at the end of the war constitutes a generation's aesthetic of being. On the level of individual mother-child relationships, a southern Italian parent's internal handling of unspeakable and shameful WWII trauma comes out in the external handling of children. Both Pisani (1990) and Bini (2006) present the sociocultural role of the southern Italian mother figure in this parent-child exchange

as fixed and static: Pisani identifies the collective archaic maternal figure as a monolithic “manifestation of a common and unconscious sense of guilt” (p. 407), while Bini addresses generational conflict in individual families as a result of the tense dichotomy between the traditional “self-sacrificing mother” and the emerging “erotic, disturbing female, disrupting the social order” (p. 142). Conversely, this thesis equates “the mother” with southern Italy’s wartime society. In this context, the end of the war in 1945 may represent the historical moment of maternal “handling”—through occupation, emigration, and mass economic reform—at which wartime hopes became nostalgic aesthetic fantasy rather than attainable reality. Pisani nor Bini, however, consider the dynamics of this possibility.

Bollas’s theory lends itself to application to the unspeakable and conflicting trauma that characterizes this handling in southern Italy. In discussing the adult’s experience of the aesthetic moment, Bollas remarks that it “seems to demand resolution into clarity but *threatens the self with annihilation if the subject seeks to speak it*” (p. 37, emphasis mine). With this in mind, Bollas’s connotation with the word “aesthetic” is not necessarily one of beauty; it may be “ugly and terrifying” (p. 12), but regardless profound in its stimulation of one’s existential ego memory. As such, the object is “solely the ego’s object and may, indeed, be to the utter shock or indifference of the person’s subjective experience of his own desire” (p. 10). The search for the transformational object is above all a function of conscious or subconscious certainty that the object will deliver transformation, rather than conscious desire, craving, or longing for the object itself. I will suggest that the consumption of products and entertainment in the post-war era sheds light on the conflicting legacy of this transformative WWII experience. Thus popular films, as transformational objects in and of themselves, are appropriate subjects for analysis.

Film as subject of analysis

This thesis employs close interpretation of film to explore the assertion that contemporary ED pathology in southern Italy is symptomatic of the transgenerational transmission of WWII trauma. This section will discuss previous studies that have used film as data for sociohistorical analysis, introduce my theoretical approach to film interpretation, and justify the suitability of psychoanalytical film studies in the context of Italian cinematic culture.

As an object of analysis, film may fill roles from social critique or political commentary to political propaganda or vehicle for escape. Such roles have been well established across national cinemas, including Italy's. While these functions are integral to a film's artistic intent, however, they fall short of apprehending a film's internal dynamics and popular reception, and the historical meaning that can be extracted from them. Kaplan (1990) and later Kaplan and Wang (2003) attempt this approach to mixed reviews in anthologies on the phenomenon of trauma in film. Both were criticized for over-employing trauma theory to cinema, resulting in lack of cohesion among essays and sometimes tenuous "leaps" to make connections between the psyche, trauma, cinema, and history (Williams, 1991; Tay, 2005).

Radstone (2001), considering various works of Kaplan, Walker, Elsaesser, and Turim, cautions against such "too enthusiastic a takeup" of the theory and possible reduction of analysis to "passive spectatorship" (p. 191). Her observation that trauma in cinema "underlines the tropes by means of which traumatic memory's correspondence to historical experience can be traced" (p. 192) is instructive. Sabbadini's (2003; 2007) later edited series of essays on psychoanalysis and European cinema employ an interdisciplinarity that satisfies Radstone's previous call for refinement and revision of trauma theory in cinema. Compared to Kaplan's edited works, Sabbadini's display more comprehensive recognition of the "remarkable analogies between

filmic language and the analytic idiom used to describe unconscious processes” (Sabbadini, 2003, p. 2). Sabbadini’s first anthology (2003) is criticized primarily for his overarching assertion that American cinema is dominated by “ideologically and artistically poor” Hollywood commercialism compared to European cinemas (Walker, 2005; Katz, 2005). His later follow-up work on European cinema (2007), however, received more positive reviews for its brilliant demonstration of an interdisciplinary approach (Sklarew, 2009).

Most controversial and cutting-edge is Rashkin’s work on the psychoanalytical study of secrets in film and other cultural texts (2008). Compared to Kaplan and Sabbadini, Rashkin approaches film as encrypted *ideology*, with an approach heavily influenced by psychoanalysts Abraham and Torok’s (1972) work on the metapsychology of secrets. Rashkin takes issue with cultural studies trends and proposes “combining psychoanalysis with close textual analysis to elaborate a new form of psychoanalytic cultural studies” (p. 19). In line with Bollas’s (1987) theories, she rejects universal paradigms based on drives, instincts, or preset stages of psychological development, and instead focuses on the specificity of human trauma. Critics differ in how well they judge Rashkin’s study to have substantiated her claim of psychoanalysis’s unique value in transforming cultural studies (Levine, 2009; Downing, 2010). This bold claim aside, her essays stand as striking examples of psychoanalysis’s potential in exploring the relationships between the workings of the unconscious and the production of literary and filmic texts. For my purposes, her work is an excellent guide for the integration of psychoanalysis into a practice of close textual reading. From Rashkin’s jumping-off point of viewing film as encrypted ideology, I will attempt to view film as encrypted *pathology*.

In pursuit of film as evidence or elaboration of observed ED prevalence and determinants in southern Italy, I will analyze film as a collective transformational object. In his presentation of

the search for the transformational object in adulthood, Bollas (1987) explicitly recognizes the role of the arts in stimulating the pre-verbal, unconscious memory of the aesthetic associated with the early mother-child relationship. He asserts that, in the collective search for the transformational object, “we go to the theatre...to search for aesthetic experiences” (p. 17). In other words: we go to the movies to be transformed. Bollas explains the two-way dynamic between the artist’s creation and the viewer’s reception of this aesthetic moment captured in art:

Culture embodies in the arts varied symbolic equivalents to the search for the transformation. In the quest for a deep subjective experience of an object, the artist both remembers for us and provides us with occasions for the experience of ego memories of transformation... In the arts we have a location for such occasional recollections: intense memories of the process of self-transformation. (p. 29)

With this framework in mind, film functions both as an aesthetic environment and as a transformational object. As an aesthetic environment, a film’s language and symbology is mediated by its creator’s (most notably the director’s) “grammar of being.” To some extent, this mediation results in the conscious and unconscious encryption in the work of the artist’s own pre-verbal aesthetic memories. As a transformational object, the aesthetic embodied in the film presents a moment that may resonate with viewers’ memories of respective relation to the mother. Contemporary popular film provides a large-group corollary for the individual’s psychic mechanism of repression, which serves to conceal the impasse of mourning. Thus popular and critical acclaim may be read as indicative of this expression of the “unthought known” and its collective resonance with a film’s audience.

Recognition of film as a transformational object is especially fitting in the context of the cultural place and project of film in contemporary Italy. Italy experienced greater cinematic revolution in the wake of WWII than did American or other European cinemas, most notably in the development of the new visual vocabulary of Italian neorealism (Zarate, 2001; Brunetta,

2009). In reaction to Fascist cinema's over-produced melodramas, immediate post-war neorealism is characterized by on-location shooting; plots evolving around daily life and anonymous characters; the employment of amateurs rather than professional actors; and themes of war, poverty, and unemployment (Dombrowski, 2000). Neorealism put regular people center-stage, and "their stories became the reflection of a collective condition" (Brunetta, 2009, p. 146).

The ways in which neorealism attempted to integrate opposing historical realities is symptomatic of the trauma of WWII in the South. Neorealism's embodiment of the contradiction between *continuity with* and *break from* the country's recent Fascist past had great implications for the fusion of national ideology and everyday experience in collective memory (Zarate, 2001). The project of even contemporary Italian cinema is to reconcile the representational legacies of Fascism and neorealism, official narrative and forgotten memory, national myth and individual experience. Similar to the proposed source of ED pathology, the source of neorealism's production was the illegibility of the WWII experience. Neorealism is itself the collective "aesthetic of being" established immediately after WWII, manifest in film. Thus neorealism and its endurance may be read as symptomatic not necessarily of pathology, but as at once revealing and concealing the source of its own production.

This aesthetic still resonates with Italians; the process and intent of neorealism remain defining aspects of contemporary Italian cinema and, to a great extent, national identity. According to Dalle Vacche (1992), body, spectacle, and allegory constitute the three parameters controlling Italian filmmakers' depiction of national identity and contemporary life within neorealism's legacy. In line with this conception of Italian cinema is the spectacle of food and meal events, and the body's consumption of them, in social allegory. With individual bodies as allegorical embodiments of the nation, the body serves as a "site of reconciliation" between

varying levels of regional or individual experience and national identity (Dalle Vacche, 1992, p. 198). Wood's (2005) analysis backs up Dalle Vacche's characterization; she takes the framework of the body and allegory to its natural conclusion, observing that the idea of "Italian-ness" in film is typically incomplete "in that landscapes and bodies are either regionally specific, or vaguely generic" (p. 77). Thus, projected stereotypes of difference linked to class, region, or gender must be viewed as refractions of Italy's multifaceted historical identity (Dalle Vacche, 1992).

The paradigmatic use of the family in film to resolve historical tensions constitutes another key neorealist tendency. As Italian cinema has evolved, this tendency has remained a distinctive feature of Italian cinema. Italian filmmakers characteristically "solve the problem of exploring the nature of the Italian nation and Italian history" by using "a family reacting to historical events as a paradigm of the nation" (Wood, 2005, p. 78). Given the family's central role in the development of ED in southern Italy, an understanding of this sociohistorical aspect of Italian cinematic composition is a necessary precursor to film interpretation in this study.

Chapter Four

Methodology

This methodology statement outlines the research strategies I will use to support my argument. It is important to note that this analysis does not aim to find depictions of ED in film, nor do I propose that films contribute to ED development. Rather, I will aim to read contemporary southern Italian films as ciphered articulations of a blockage to mourning. This will require anasemic, or “backward,” reading, as demonstrated by Rashkin (2009). Before delving into Rashkin’s model for anasemic reading, I will interrogate Galt’s (2002) more politically oriented analytical strategies in order to distinguish how my approach differs from mainstream critical positions. Next, I will introduce the films that serve as the data for this study and the criteria for their selection. Finally, I will review the possible limitations and challenges of this methodology.

Galt’s (2002) analysis of three Italian films—*Cinema Paradiso*, *Mediterraneo*, and *Il Postino*—aims to establish an ideological connection between these films’ 1940s settings and their 1990s production. Only after she outlines the ways in which the failed political opportunities of 1945 resonate with the precarious situation of the Italian Republic in the 1990s does she proceed to interpret each film. Throughout Galt’s examination, inherent aspects of the films’ language, such as nostalgia, are read as auxiliary to sociopolitical critique. Never does she go further to consider these aspects independent of and separate from their extra-cinematic context. While her analysis draws entirely valid connections, I submit that her selective reading for predetermined political connections misses a fundamental unconscious dimension, which, when identified, can connect the films to collective blocked mourning and its implications for both national identity and individual pathology.

Conversely, Rashkin's (2009) analysis of the Polish film *A Short Film About Killing* privileges analysis of film in and of itself. Her strategy is to read from narrative *back* to culture. Rashkin's analysis of *A Short Film* reveals a multilayered narrative about both personal secrets and collective traumas. Rashkin's conception of "secret" here does not coincide with customary definitions. Rather than connoting private or confidential knowledge kept from others, a "secret" in this analysis is the result of a trauma whose "devastating emotional consequences are...consigned to internal silence...by the sufferers themselves" (Rand, 1994, p. 99). Contrary to Galt, Rashkin employs a "backward or retrospective gaze—from end to beginning, present to past, oriented by a kind of...*anasemic* move back toward prior unseen dramas and significations" (Rashkin, 2009, p. 316). "Anasemic" refers to the constant movement "back up toward" (from the Greek *ana*) successively earlier and deeper sources of signification (*semia*) (Rashkin, 1988). Because of her focus on unspoken or unrevealed personal secrets, Rashkin must reconstruct her analysis from ciphered traces within the text before she can begin to connect them to contemporary social or political conditions. I will attempt to model this backward-looking gaze in my own analysis.

To analyze *A Short Film*, Rashkin begins with an examination of the ways in which the protagonist's actions speak "in cryptic form" of his own shameful or unspeakable secret and how this prevents him from grieving or mourning (Rashkin, 2009, p. 312). This step of her analysis remains entirely *within* the structures of the film, removing all "ideological, religious, and social filters that color and limit vision, in order to see more clearly how dramas...can haunt individuals and societies" (p. 339). Her close reading of the film's internal aesthetics determines the way in which certain symbols take on meaning. For example, Rashkin demonstrates how the protagonist's act of killing may be seen as foregrounded by a repetitive representation of creases

and folds that call attention to the act of looking backward. With this established, she is then able to decipher the unconscious motivation of the murder: a repressed shameful incestuous secret.

Only once Rashkin has fully unraveled the ciphered narrative within the film does she expand to explore the ways in which the film embeds collective, national traumas in the protagonist's individual, private tale. Here she re-contextualizes the film's symbols in order to complete this "backward" reading from the film to its greater sociopolitical context. Reading from film back to culture ultimately exposes the film's tacit commentary on culture without the interference of the analyst's historiographic bias. Similarly, my analytical position seeks to uncover how each film's cinematographic language contours depictions of processes of mourning and acts of eating. My emphasis on close reading of film will reveal the specificity with which filmic language may cryptically inscribe additional secrets and narratives.

Rashkin maintains throughout her analysis that a film may be read in this way if and only if it *invites* anasemic reading. Galt does not premise her reading on this logic. According to Rashkin, the viewer is "obliged to co-create the film by reading in reverse each part of the story, each sequence, and each shot" in response to visual, acoustic, and rhetorical cues (Rashkin, 2009, p. 326). Cues of the presence of an unconscious narrative may include split levels of physicality or being (i.e. basements or underworlds), flashbacks, dreams, and "false" endings (i.e. a conclusion that is superficially satisfying, but upon closer reading reveals remaining narrative tensions or loose ends). Through this methodology, the language of trauma can reveal a *psychoanalytic historicity* of the text itself in tandem with its points of contact with the social, historical, and political circumstances of its production. Read together, they unlock new possibilities for an intrapsychic reading and understanding of history. I suggest this offers a new and compelling vantage for analyzing the etiology of pathologies, such as those associated with

ED in southern Italy.

Cues informed by the particular relationship between eating and the process of mourning are central to my argument that ED pathology emerged from the incomplete mourning of the southern WWII experience. The concept of introjection, identified as a communicative “process by which a necessary alteration in the ego’s topography is effected so that the reality of a loss may be integrated within the psyche” (Rashkin, 2008, p. 30), is a central tenet of theories related to the metapsychology of mourning. This idea is thus fundamental to my analytical approach.

A detailed explication of the implications of this theory warrants citation. In *Unspeakable Secrets and the Psychoanalysis of Culture*, Rashkin (2008) explains:

[Abraham and Torok] proposed that the conversion of a loss into language is a critical sign of its introjection and of the psyche's accommodation of that loss. They held that an early paradigm of this process is found right after birth in the infant's experience of an "empty mouth" (“Mourning *or* Melancholia,” 127). The absence of the maternal object (the breast) leads to crying and howling, and these eventually give way to speech addressed to the mother as a partial replacement for absent satisfactions of the mouth. Ultimately, the mother's presence itself is replaced by words. (p. 30)

She then goes on to cite Abraham and Torok’s theory directly:

The absence of objects and the empty mouth are transformed into words; at last, even the experiences related to words are converted into other words. So the wants of the original oral vacancy are remedied by being turned into verbal relationships with the speaking community at large. Introjecting a desire, a grief, a situation means channeling them through language into a communion of empty mouths. This is how the literal ingestion of foods becomes introjection when viewed figuratively. The passage from food to language in the mouth presupposes the successful replacement of the object's presence with the self's cognizance of its absence. Since language acts and makes up for absence by representing, by *giving figurative shape to* presence, it can only be *comprehended* or *shared* in a "community of empty mouths.” (cited in Rashkin, 2008, p. 30-31)

My film analysis will attempt to read the repeated absence of language about loss as a sign that this process of introjection has been blocked, and that something is obstructing the characters' ability to mourn. Here mourning explicitly intersects with eating: if eating and ingestion are analogous to successful introjection, as Abraham and Torok suggest above, then disordered eating may function as a metaphor for disrupted introjection. I will focus on identifying the *blockages* to characters' articulation of loss, and then link this to the emergence of ED pathology as a result of similar impediments to articulation.

As discussed previously, the imperative to be faithful to the narrative of the Italian Resistance required southern Italians to deny their desire to maintain a status quo under Allied occupation. The result was a silencing of the language of loss and a blocking of a collective ability to mourn, which I identify as a psychopathogenic trauma. Collective contemporary ED pathology thus can be read as a psychosomatic symptom of psychic indigestion, or, more accurately, a symptom of collective dyspepsia. My analysis will draw connections to observed ED symptoms specific to southern Italy, such as low self-esteem and high degrees of emotional confusion, maturity fears, social insecurity, and perfectionist tendencies (Ruggiero, 2002). Given the role of the family and painful parental criticism in the development of these pathological determinants, Wood's (2005) idea of the family as an analogue for the nation in Italian film will be central to my establishment of connections among the family depicted in film, the nation that experienced WWII, and the typical southern Italian family unit.

In this thesis I will examine Giuseppe Tornatore's *Cinema Paradiso*; Ettore Scola's *La famiglia*; Francesco Rosi's *Tre fratelli*; and Mario Martone's *L'amore molesto*. My criteria for these films' selection require sufficient evidence for reading each film as a transformational object, and appropriate content for the analysis demanded by my research question—asking why

Southern Italy shows surprisingly high rates of ED despite its relatively rural, traditional society—and my hypothesis—that ED etiology can be traced to the transgenerational transmission of traumatic WWII experiences in the South.

First, each film’s director must have been born in southern Italy. This criterion is absolutely necessary in order to analyze each film’s aesthetic as a collective “aesthetic of being” resulting from handling related to the southern Italian experience of WWII and its transgenerational transmission. Second, each film must have received significant critical and/or popular acclaim, thus signaling it as an object of consumption that is sought and received as a transformational object. Together, these two criteria confirm the role of the arts in the re-creation of the aesthetic moment: first as an aesthetic environment produced by an artist, and then as a transformational object consumed by an audience.

Next, I have selected films whose content and composition allow for the thematic analysis demanded by this thesis. I based this selection on the most crucial themes at the foundation of the proposed connection between WWII and contemporary ED pathologies: a significant loss; the guilt, shame, and silence that follow from that loss’s conflicting nature; and the resultant inability to mourn that loss. In order to better analyze the cultural relationship between such losses and eating behaviors, I have also selected films which incorporate eating and food symbology in their narratives, particularly in the mourning processes depicted in these narratives.

Finally, in order to legitimize the proposed mode of anasemic analysis, I have chosen films that invite such interpretation with allegory, dreams and nightmares, flashbacks, and other cinematic tools that allude to the presence of an additional, deeper psychological layer under each film’s apparent narrative. I have further considered the ways in which each film’s anasemic

cues suggest the specific nature of analysis necessary to uncover the inexplicable or inarticulable aspects of their hidden narratives. Each film's approach to specific themes—including the unconscious, temporality and the passing of time, and silent or unspoken plot elements—contains instruction as to the nature of the anasemic “backward glance” that must be employed to best analyze the film.

Four films alone cannot be claimed to be representative of the Italian film canon, and, indeed, this study is not attempting such a feat. Rather, according to the criteria described above, these four films represent a specific moment in Italian history and a particular mode of representing the South in Italian film. The four films in this study were all released in the 1980s and early 1990s; *La famiglia* was released in 1987, *Cinema Paradiso* in 1989, *Tre fratelli* in 1981, and *L'amore molesto* in 1995. These films, explicitly and implicitly, provided a historical memory of WWII for an audience comprised of the first generation that did *not* live through the war. In dealing with various political subject matter—from 1970s terrorism in *Tre fratelli* and mid-1990s Naples in *L'amore molesto* to post-WWII Sicily in *Cinema Paradiso* and an entire eighty years of Italian history in *La famiglia*—each of the films depict WWII scenes and tensions accessible to baby-boomer audiences. In this way, films, in addition to parents and older family members, become a source of knowledge about WWII for the post-WWII generations. As this thesis is concerned with *secondary* rather than primary experiences of WWII trauma as the source of ED pathology, analysis of films directed at and acclaimed by these generations can be expected to yield relevant results.

Regardless of efforts to select optimal films for analysis, four films remains a small sample. The following analysis is intended to demonstrate the possibilities of a controversial methodology, and prompt discussion about additional films, literature, and cultural texts that

may benefit from its use. While four films alone cannot prove a theory, they can, hopefully, begin to unearth cinematographic and social trends and inform further cross-cultural research in ED and historical trauma.

Chapter Five

Exclusion and Interruption in the Meals of *La famiglia*

Hailed as “Italy’s most acute social chronicler,” director Ettore Scola takes on 80 years of Italian history in his 1987 release *La famiglia* (Harvey, 1988). In nine isolated acts at intervals of ten years, the film follows its protagonist Carlo from his baptism in 1906 to his 80th birthday in 1986: the first act depicts a memory from 1906, the second from 1916, the third from 1926, and so on. *La famiglia*’s action remains confined to Carlo’s family’s apartment for its duration, with World War I, the Spanish Civil War, the rise of Mussolini, World War II, and the Cold War all taking place just outside the viewer’s field of vision. Carlo’s ongoing affair with his wife Beatrice’s sister Adriana dominates the narrative up to and after Beatrice’s death.

The 80-year-old Carlo narrates the beginning of each act, signaling that the film is told through his own subjective memories from the “present” of 1986. Notably, these memories omit both Beatrice’s death and the entirety of WWII: Beatrice passes away sometime between the seventh and eighth acts (i.e. between 1966 and 1976), and the entirety of Italy’s involvement in WWII occurs in the space between the fourth and fifth acts (i.e. between 1936 and 1946). In the aftermath of both Beatrice’s death and of WWII, neither is explicitly referenced; instead, the viewer is left to infer their significance through their indirect effects on the family.

With this element of selective memory in mind, Scola’s sweeping treatment of nearly a century of Italian history emerges as a testament to the necessity of exclusion in the maintenance of domestic, and national, harmony. Given the significance of the “communion of empty mouths”—that is, the sharing of language about loss with others—in healthy mourning processes

(as described by Abraham & Torok, 1972), motifs of exclusion in *La famiglia* take on new meaning. The exclusion or even self-alienation of a character from the family table, the evasion of political topics during mealtime discussions, and silence regarding Carlo's affair with his wife's sister all comment on an inability to join in a communion to mourn a loss. The repeated motif of interrupted and unfinished meals, when viewed in terms of the symbolic connection between eating and introjection, further suggests problems with mourning. These themes of exclusion and interruption are vital to *La famiglia's* depiction of the psychoanalytic process of mourning, and draw connections to South-specific ED determinants concerned with intrafamilial tensions and perfectionist tendencies.

This chapter will proceed in three parts. First, I will identify the ways in which *La famiglia* invites anasemic analysis. Next, I will analyze the primary individual loss depicted in the film: the death of Carlo's wife Beatrice. Here I will identify the motif of the "interrupted meal" as symbolic of interrupted introjection or mourning. Finally, I will extend the "interrupted meal" motif to analyze the primary collective loss depicted in *La famiglia*: WWII and its aftermath. I will conclude with discussion of the ways in which depictions of the individual and the collective in *La famiglia* align to draw larger conclusions about ED in Southern Italy.

In addition to the memories that dominate the narrative, *La famiglia's* first scene announces allegory and invites anasemic analysis. The film begins in the central hallway of Carlo's family's apartment, a location to which the camera returns between every act. This focus on an interior corridor suggests an inward-looking dynamic superimposed on the backward-glancing narrative structure established by Carlo's memories. The confinement of the film's action to the apartment further suggests an allegorical condensing of the collective Italian experience to one restricted space. Repeated signifiers of writing, reading, and literariness

confirm the film's allegorical nature. From the first act, characters regularly quote Italian literature, recite poems, and read and write letters. *La famiglia*'s first moments align the film itself with literary texts: when the opening shot moves from the hallway into a living room through salon doors, the left door opens outward like the cover of a book (Figure 5.1), revealing Carlo's family posing for a group picture after his baptism.



Figure 5.1: Before the left door opens to reveal the family posing for a photo, the title of the film appears in front of the doors like a title on the cover of a book.

At the conclusion of the first act, Carlo's mother, an opera singer, sings the classical French love song "Plaisir d'amour" for the extended family members gathered in the apartment. She begins with the song's refrain in French: "*Plaisir d'amour ne dure qu'un moment/chagrin d'amour dure toute la vie.*" ("The pleasure of love lasts only a moment/the pain of love lasts a lifetime."¹) The camera slowly pans around the room as she repeats the refrain in Italian and French, showing the faces of each family member until it finally rests on a close-up of baby Carlo. The lyric that Carlo's mother sings foreshadows the central conflict of Carlo's life that is about to unfold: his decades-long affair with his wife Beatrice's sister Adriana, and the painful

¹ My translation. (All other translations are from film subtitles unless otherwise noted.)

regret and even denial it leaves him with after Beatrice's death.

Carlo's narration at the beginning of the eighth act implies Beatrice's passing: "*Questa casa non ha mai stata così grande. Del funerale si è occupata Adelina. È sempre così cara e gentile.*" ("The house has never felt so big. Adelina took care of the funeral. She's always so kind and helpful.") Beatrice's death shapes the scenes that follow this narration, but neither Carlo nor any other character directly refers to it. The seemingly unnecessary detail about Adelina, the family's maid and later the wife of Carlo's younger brother Giulio, provides a retrospective clue concerning food and the mourning process. For the duration of the film, Adelina is associated with food; she prepares, serves, and clears food as the family maid, and later, after she has married Giulio, provides Carlo and Beatrice with food staples during the post-WWII food shortages. Adelina's role in now preparing a funeral establishes a link between food and mourning. The consumption of food that Adelina has dutifully facilitated for the family now maps onto her responsibility for arranging the introjection—via a funeral ceremony—of the loss of Beatrice.

This funeral, however, is implied to take place in the space between the eighth and ninth acts, and is never shown in the film. Instead, depictions of food and eating in these acts suggest that Carlo's mourning of Beatrice's death is blocked. After arguing with Carlo and dramatically leaving the apartment, Adriana asks his maid if he has been eating. The maid responds that he did not want anything that day. Later in the eighth act, Carlo is shown sitting down to eat dinner alone in his kitchen after having refused a dinner invitation from his son and daughter-in-law. This scene is in stark contrast with the family dinner scenes that dominate the film up to this point. Finally, in the ninth act, Carlo is unable to bring himself to eat when dining with his grandson Carletto, prompting Carletto to wordlessly take Carlo's fork and feed Carlo spaghetti

by hand.

The conflict that blocks Carlo's mourning is announced at the beginning of the eighth act, immediately after Carlo's narration refers to Beatrice's death. He sits in the apartment living room while Adriana plays piano. Carlo suddenly asks her, "*Quando hai saputo?*" ("When did you find out [that Beatrice knew about us]?"²) The conversation that follows implies that Beatrice knew about Carlo and Adriana's affair, but "*ha stata zitta*" ("said nothing") for the sake of the family. Carlo is reluctant to believe that Beatrice would have kept her knowledge of the affair secret. Adriana leaves, angry, in a scene that recalls two similarly structured sequences in the third and sixth acts: Carlo and Adriana argue, she calls a taxi, and she abruptly leaves the apartment. The parallels between earlier parts of the film, during which they were at the height of their courtship, and this arguing sequence suggest that they were still romantically involved in the eighth act. For Carlo to mourn Beatrice's death—and, perhaps even more significantly, to come to terms with the years of silent suffering Beatrice endured because of his affair—is to close out Adriana. But to deny Beatrice's pain is to deny his family, his home, and his career. As Carlo laments to Adriana, "*Senza Beatrice...niente sarebbe esistito.*" ("Without Beatrice... nothing would have existed.") Carlo's words even imply relief that Beatrice kept his secret to protect their family and the life they had made together.

The entire film before Beatrice's death must be viewed in the context of her ultimate loss, as hindsight and the emergence of the above conflict necessarily color Carlo's memories. With the specific nature of the conflict between Adriana and Beatrice in mind, the viewer may better attempt to see the previous acts of the film as Carlo, narrating from 1986, sees them. At the beginning of the fourth act, the viewer learns that Carlo and Beatrice have married and had two

² My translation.

children, Paolino and Maddalena. Beatrice brings Carlo and the children breakfast in bed, handing out food with a piece of bread for herself in her mouth. She is about to begin eating with them when the phone rings; Adelina announces that it is Adriana calling from Paris, where she has moved to pursue music. Beatrice repeats everything Adriana tells her for the family members gathered around the phone. This sequence confirms Beatrice's silence in the context of her marriage to Carlo, anticipating Carlo's revelation of her long silence regarding his affair. At first her mouth is literally filled and she is unable to speak except to smile or nod, and then she is a mouthpiece for her sister.

This scene also depicts one of the many interrupted meals throughout the film. I propose that this trope of the interrupted meal cryptically speaks about interrupted mourning; if healthy ingestion of food may be metaphorically equated with the healthy introjection of a loss, then an interrupted meal may be read as a metaphor for interrupted, or blocked, introjection. The dynamics of the breakfast scene described above, for example, reflect Beatrice's inability to mourn Carlo's betrayal of her. In this scene she is precluded from eating or speaking, first because she must serve her family and then because of Adriana's intrusion. This reflects Beatrice's silent saga throughout *La famiglia*, in which her obligations to her family and her sister prevent her from speaking of her knowledge of Carlo's affair. This "interrupted meal" pattern appears early in the film, and reappears in nearly every act.

The dominant scene of the second act, in which Carlo is only ten years old, introduces the viewer to the family dining room for the first time, and sets the tone for the meal scenes to follow. Carlo reads aloud from the Italian epic *Orlando innamorato*, about the fictional thief Brunello, as the family sits down for dinner. Carlo and Giulio's father bangs his fist on the table and announces that a guest of the family discovered his wallet had been robbed while at their

house; indeed, the viewer sees the boys take half a lira out of a coat earlier in the act. Giulio accidentally blurts out a confession, and Carlo follows with his own apology. Their father is disappointed that the boys confessed their crime only after being confronted, and sends them to bed without any dinner. The family laughs about the situation after the boys leave the table, but the connection between food and the more serious conflict that later blocks Carlo's mourning of Beatrice remains: a failure to confess and show remorse openly and independently results in exclusion from the family table and the redemptive consumption that occurs there.

A dinner with Adriana and her fiancé in the fifth act speaks further to Carlo's guilt, specifically concerning his longstanding attraction to and involvement with Adriana. Carlo and Adriana's fiancé begin an argument about politics that descends into dead-end semantics. Carlo appears to provoke Adriana's fiancé more out of jealousy than out of political disagreement. Despite Beatrice's attempts to calm the situation, Carlo bangs his fist on the table, reminiscent of his father in the second act, and leaves in frustration. Just as young Carlo's failure to confess stealing in the second act sends him away from the family table, Carlo's inability to admit his betrayal of Beatrice is aggravated by the presence of Adriana's fiancé, and he is excluded from the meal.

Although *La famiglia* primarily highlights Carlo's losses and suffering, Beatrice's story offers equal analytical value as it speaks to the silencing or exclusion of points of view within the family. Here Beatrice is perhaps an allegory for a larger loss; just as the viewer must interpret Beatrice's incomplete saga through Carlo's dominating point of view, the diverse experiences of WWII in Italy are filtered through the national narrative of Italian victory over Fascism at the end of WWII. Only the incomplete myth—here represented by Carlo's subjective and exclusive memories of Beatrice—can hold the nation and the family together.

In addition to illuminating, in Rashkin's (2009) words, "the family drama...that is not shown in the film but whose lines are traced throughout" (p. 320), the interrupted meal is even more pronounced in the depiction of the unseen *national* drama whose lines are traced throughout the film: WWII. The gap in which WWII is implied, between acts four and five, is preceded by a politically charged—and repeatedly interrupted—meal. Nicola, Carlo's uncle, arrives unannounced, and stays for dinner to tell the family a boisterous story about meeting Mussolini in his capacity as a municipal secretary. Giulio implies that Carlo does not support Mussolini like Uncle Nicola does, and the atmosphere becomes tense. Nicola asks Carlo's mother to explain, but she ignores the question, and instead asks Adelina to serve him more food. Carlo and Giulio briefly argue about Carlo's refusal to officially sign in support of Fascism as Carlo's mother and now Beatrice urge them to keep eating. The tension seems to dissipate, and the camera, from behind Nicola's place at the head of the table, looks beyond the dinner table and down the central hallway (Figure 5.2).

Carlo's mother's and Beatrice's efforts to avert the topic of Fascism with admonishments to eat more food also adds new historical dimensions to Nicola's character. Nicola's identification with eating and gluttony signals his enthusiastic "consumption" of the rhetoric of the growing Fascist movement. Nicola is first introduced as young boy in the film's first act, in which he has a stomachache and his mother warns him that he will get sick if he eats too much. Thus, whereas Carlo is eventually unable to eat, Nicola is consistently depicted as *overfed* to the point of illness and indigestion. Given the connection between physical indigestion of food and psychic indigestion of a loss or trauma, this perhaps suggests that Nicola is not as enthusiastic in his subscription to Fascism as he strives to appear. Significantly, however, it is Carlo's dissent that is excluded from conversation for the sake of family—and allegorically, national—unity.



Figure 5.2: Carlo and Giulio argue about adherence to Fascism until their mother and Beatrice urge them to stop talking and eat more. As the argument ends, the camera gazes past the family and down the apartment's central hallway, reminding the viewer of the film's allegorical nature.

Further, the year of 1936, both as the setting of the fourth act of *La famiglia* and as a landmark in Italian history, marks a reference point in the events that led to WWII. In the film, Nicola comes over for dinner and Mussolini is mentioned for the first time; in Italian history, Fascist Italy invaded, conquered, and annexed Ethiopia, and later in the year signed a treaty of cooperation with Germany that marked the beginning of the Rome-Berlin Axis. At this point, Nicola's unexpected arrival and dominance over the table symbolizes the impending arrival of the Fascist war.

After a brief interlude in the central hallway of the apartment—signifying the gap between 1936 and 1946 in which WWII occurs—act five begins with Carlo's narration. He summarizes what has happened to various family members since the fourth act, and laments the rising prices of food staples. Most notably, he says that "*Adelina del '43 non è piu in servizio da noi*" ("Adelina hasn't worked for us since 1943"), and that she has moved to work with her brothers in the *borsa nera* (black market). Adelina comes over to visit minutes later, and, thanks to her black market earnings, brings food staples to share with Carlo and Beatrice. The year of Adelina's departure from the family coincides with the Allies' 1943 invasion of Sicily and the mainland South. This suggests that the potential for mourning that Adelina represents departed

from the family with the invasion and the divisive years that followed. Her following appearance as a symbol of black market wealth further confirms the conflicting experience of war in the South: the black market established by the Allies' presence allowed her to quit her job as a maid, earn an independent living, and eventually feed her former employers.

Later in the fifth act, during one of Carlo's three aunts' notoriously dramatic arguments, Carlo mischievously places a figurine of a Victorian woman in their path. One of the aunts smashes it, and another aunt yells that she has ruined Uncle Nicola's figurine. The designation of the figurine as belonging to Nicola recalls his appearance in the previous act as a symbol of Mussolini's and Fascism's rise in Italy. The symbolic destruction of the figurine signals a shift in the concerns plaguing Carlo's family; while the previous act depicted the rumblings of WWII, the rest of the film revolves around "picking up the pieces" in the aftermath.

The subtlest—but also the most telling—interrupted meal takes place at the beginning of the fifth act. This interrupted meal is the first dialogue and interaction after the 1936-1946 gap in which WWII is implied. Carlo's daughter Maddalena interrupts his breakfast of rationed coffee to ask him a homework question. She goes on to tell him about a dream she had the previous night: "*Stanotte ho sognato che morivi.*" ("Last night I dreamed that you died.") He asks if the dream made her sad, and she cheerfully replies, "*No. Sognare la morta di qualcuno gli allunga la vita.*" ("No. I think dreaming that somebody dies helps them live longer.") Carlo laughs and affectionately rubs her head in reply. When read in relation to Beatrice's death later in the film, Maddalena's strange dream is a commentary on enduring traumas that cannot be mourned. All of *La famiglia* may be read as a series of Carlo's "dreams" of people and times that, in the "present" year of 1986, are no longer part of his life. Just as Maddalena says that "dreaming that somebody dies helps them live longer," Carlo's specific memories of the two major losses in his

life—the personal loss of Beatrice and the collective losses of WWII—keeps them alive in his psyche.

The psychic exclusion and culinary interruption that dominates Carlo's memories suggests that he has not, and *can* not, bury these losses with any finality. He assuages his guilt about Beatrice's silent suffering with inadmissible relief that she never spoke out and disturbed the family harmony. Similarly, this tension between relief and guilt speaks to the Southern experience of WWII, especially in terms of the economic dimensions alluded to by Adelina's involvement in the black market: the economic relief from the Allies' presence is in tension with political guilt related to the region's physical and political distance from the Resistance movement.

The presence of interrupted meals *La famiglia* signals encrypted ED pathology, especially in relation to unresolved losses. The *disordered* eating characteristic of the interrupted meal symbolizes the inability to introject and to mourn. The implicit association between interrupted eating and family dynamics throughout *La famiglia*'s depiction of meals aligns with South-specific ED concerns regarding parental criticism and family tensions. The above depiction of food as a controlling agent resonates with ED pathologies in which perfectionism and a desire for control figure heavily into the development of disorders. In southern Italy in particular, the depiction of such control through consumption is especially resonant in conjunction with discussion of the roots of Fascism and WWII. Like the smashed figurine, the family in *La famiglia* is fractured. Food provides the façade of qualified harmony only after meals have been interrupted and uncomfortable political topics have been avoided, pointing to food and its controlled consumption as a way to maintain control on the individual, familial, and national levels.

Chapter Six

Invitation to or Preclusion from Mourning: A Comparative Study of *Cinema Paradiso*

Giuseppe Tornatore's *Cinema Paradiso* was meant as a love letter to Italy's fallen national cinema. Ironically, its subsequent international success was in many ways a turning point in the recovery of the Italian film industry. In addition to outstanding recognition at the 1989 Cannes Film Festival, BAFTA Awards, and Golden Globe Awards, it was the first Italian film to win the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. The film that garnered such critical and popular acclaim, however, was not the film that Tornatore originally intended. Tornatore's original 155-minute *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso* was released in Italy in 1988, but was pulled from circulation in response to lackluster reviews and poor box office performance. Producer Franco Cristald then pared the film down to 123 minutes, adding virtually no new material and merely simplifying the film's long and complicated storyline. Despite Tornatore's reservations about the altered version, it was re-released internationally in 1989 as the now-famous *Cinema Paradiso*.

I argue that Cristald and Tornatore's editorial omissions allowed the 1989 version to offer audiences a straightforward fantasy of healthy—but, in reality, unattainable--introjection. To substantiate this reading, this chapter will analyze the two releases of *Cinema Paradiso* from both a cinematographic and historical perspective. After providing a synopsis and identifying the film's instructional invitations to anasemic analysis, I will compare the final scene in both versions of the film to demonstrate how the 1988 version invites, and the 1989 version precludes, the viewer's participation in a healthy mourning process. I will then link these depictions of

mourning with depictions of food and eating, drawing on the figurative relationship between digesting food and digesting, or introjecting, a loss. Next, I will establish connections among film, Alfredo, Salvatore's father, and WWII. Finally, I will explore the ways in which *Cinema Paradiso*'s cryptic depiction of the inability to mourn WWII losses resonates with audiences who never experienced WWII directly.

In three acts, the film follows the mentor/mentee relationship between young Salvatore ("Toto") di Vita and Alfredo, the projectionist at the Cinema Paradiso in fictional Giancaldo, Sicily. In the film's prologue, the adult Salvatore, a successful filmmaker in Rome, finds out that Alfredo has died, and that he must return to Giancaldo for the funeral. This launches the film into Salvatore's memories of his childhood relationship with Alfredo. In the first act, a six-year-old Salvatore falls in love with cinema in the aftermath of WWII and his father's death. In the second act, roughly ten years later, a now high-school-age Salvatore falls in love with Elena, the daughter of a wealthy banker, only to receive no reply to his letters and calls when he leaves Sicily to serve compulsory military service.

Here, the plotlines of the two versions diverge. In the 1989 release, Elena's story ends here, and the relatively short third act focuses on Alfredo's funeral in Giancaldo. In the 1988 version, however, the adult Salvatore finds Elena and asks why she never contacted him. He learns that Alfredo hid a letter that Elena wrote to Salvatore, thus making both Elena and Salvatore think they were being ignored by the other, because he feared that Elena would distract Salvatore from a successful career in film. Elena has now married and started a family, however, and both the 1988 and 1989 versions end with Salvatore alone back in Rome.

In both versions, memory and the unconscious are privileged modes of presentation. The centrality of flashback invites the viewer to engage in anasemic analysis; the majority of the film

is presented through Salvatore's uninterrupted memories of his childhood and adolescence, returning to the "present" only when the adult Salvatore returns to Giancaldo for Alfredo's funeral in the third act. Frequent use of film quoting adds another layer to *Cinema Paradiso's* narrative structure. Film quoting draws the viewer to infer "that not only is there an evident connection between film images and collective memory, but also that the act of remembering and its filmic representation are similar" (Ferrero-Regis, 2002, p. 2). Utilizing the breadth of the 20th century Italian film canon, Tornatore's film quoting points out the ways in which film after WWII, to an unprecedented extent, provided both a reflection of the Italian national aesthetic and a source of national memory. Salvatore's generation, coming of age immediately after WWII, would have been the first generation to interact with film and memory in this way.

Central to both plotlines is the fact that the films showing at the Cinema Paradiso have all been edited. The town priest, Father Adelfio, previews every film showing at Cinema Paradiso in private, ringing a small bell in the empty theater to alert Alfredo up in the projection booth to every romantic or sexually explicit scene that must be cut before the film can be shown to the Giancaldo public. Because of this, the motif of bells in *Cinema Paradiso* has most often been interpreted as a critique of the Catholic Church's interference in Italian cinema and popular culture (Vahdani, 2011). In addition to this political reading, I propose that the bells in *Cinema Paradiso* provide instruction for an anasemic reading of memory and omission throughout the film. Just as the priest rings a bell to cut love scenes from upcoming features, the sound of bells indicates that something is missing or revised from the film *itself*.

With this in mind, it is worth noting that the sound of bells brackets Salvatore's memories: wind chimes and church bells cue his first memories in the first act of the film, and then the sound of a train bell wraps up his reveries at the end of the second act. In addition to

indicating omissions, these bells call attention to the passage of time (church bells announcing the hour, train bells ringing in conjunction with a train schedule, etc.) and, thus, narration of history. The motif of bells, then, draws a link between omission, memory, and time, suggesting that any narration of history must include editing and exceptions. Because the film is told through Salvatore's memories, the viewer may infer that the entirety of *Cinema Paradiso*, including all visual, auditory, and temporal elements, is subject to his conscious or unconscious manipulation. Just as the films showing at the Cinema Paradiso are censored and incomplete, so is Salvatore's memory. This invites comparative analysis of the 1988 and 1989 versions, with special attention to omissions and cuts between the two versions.

The final scene, however, remains untouched and uncut in both versions. After returning to Rome from Alfredo's funeral, Salvatore views a mysterious film reel left to him by Alfredo. Salvatore starts to cry as he realizes that the film reel is a montage of all the love scenes Father Adelfio once cut from the films that showed at the Cinema Paradiso. Alfredo had promised Salvatore he could have them, on the condition that he stop bothering Alfredo in the projection booth, when Salvatore was just six years old. Despite the fact that this scene is identical between 1988's *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso* and 1989's *Cinema Paradiso*, its context in the two divergent storylines leaves the viewer with decidedly different impressions.

The 1989 version of *Cinema Paradiso* depicts, I propose, a false conclusion that serves to invite viewers to take part in Salvatore's introjection of Alfredo's death. Viewers can watch the film reel alongside Salvatore and participate in the closure he gains from it. This finale contributes to the nostalgic sweetness that drew some critics to warn audiences of "an aftertaste of phoniness" (Kehr, 1990). The 1989 version smacks of such "phoniness" because it deprives the film of the central conflict between young Salvatore's relationship with Alfredo as a loving

father figure, and the adult Salvatore's understanding of Salvatore's cruel trick against him and Elena. Even without explicit inclusion in the 1989 version, traces of this conflict remain in the text. The unquestioned disappearance of Elena from Salvatore's life; Alfredo's fervent, and even aggressive, insistence that Salvatore leave Giancaldo and never come back; and the adult Salvatore's noted lack of satisfying personal relationships in Rome all delegitimize the film's neat conclusion. Because the producer worked only with material from the 1988 version to create the truncated 1989 version, these traces of the deeper 1988 conflict are out of context in the watered-down 1989 plot.

In the 1988 version, in which the viewer has seen Salvatore meet Elena again as an adult, the final scene occurs in the explicit context of the narrative tensions and loose ends that only implicitly haunt the 1989 version. A viewer of the 1988 version has all the information necessary to conclude that Salvatore cannot mourn Alfredo or Elena without betraying the other: to mourn the death of Alfredo is to betray the loss of Elena that Alfredo engineered, but to mourn the ultimate loss of Elena is to betray the successful film career that Alfredo made possible. With knowledge of Alfredo's sabotage of Salvatore and Elena's relationship, the content of the film reel in the final scene takes on added significance. In addition to keeping his promise to the six-year-old Salvatore, Alfredo's dying wish has been to attempt to give back what he took from Salvatore; the film reel of kisses and romantic moments is a symbol of the intimacy and human relationship from which he precluded Salvatore when he hid Elena's letter. While the 1989 version shows simply a fulfilled childhood promise, the 1988 version reminds audiences of this unreachable past that never really was, and that now can only be realized in the "illusory paradise of the silver screen" (Marrone, 2010, p. 9). Instead of a potentially satisfying conclusion, this version only serves to call attention to the flimsy nature of Alfredo's offering.

The symbolic presence—and absence—of food in the 1988 version serves to further eliminate any element of an invitation to mourn, and thus eliminate the narrative possibility of a satisfying conclusion. This interpretation is grounded in Abraham and Torok’s theories of mourning, in which “the literal ingestion of foods becomes introjection when viewed figuratively” (qtd. in Rashkin, 2008, p. 31). Thus, the inability to eat or ingest foods functions as a figurative symbol for a character’s inability to mourn a loss. In a scene that does not appear in the 1989 version, the adult Salvatore has dinner with his mother and extended family after Alfredo’s funeral. His niece asks when he is going back to Rome, and he says he does not know.



Figure 6.1: Unable to eat, Salvatore looks around the table at out-of-focus hands of his family member eating spaghetti around him.

The question hangs in the air, and Salvatore stops eating. Only Salvatore, motionless, is in the frame, with his family members’ fork-fulls of spaghetti intruding the shot as they continue to eat around him (Figure 6.1). This dinner takes place in the same dining room in which, in another cut scene, Alfredo dines with Salvatore’s family thirty years earlier while Salvatore is across town waiting in vain outside Elena’s window. In both scenes, Salvatore cannot eat with others

because of his inability to mourn a loss. In the former, he cannot mourn Alfredo's death; in the second, he cannot accept the end of his relationship with Elena. These scenes are echoed in the 1988 version's conclusion, which similarly precludes viewers from participating in consumption—of food, film, or any other transformational object—and the introjection it symbolizes.

As opposed to the impossibility of introjection depicted in the 1988 version, the 1989 version projects a fantasy of introjection, and invites audiences to view Alfredo's film reel just as Salvatore does. The popularity of this version may be read as symptomatic of viewers' desire to commune in a process of mourning via consumption of a particular work of art—that is, the film reel that Alfredo leaves to Salvatore. The ornamental lion's head through which Alfredo projects films from the projection booth onto the Cinema Paradiso's screen confirms this idea of consuming film in a metaphor for introjection. (Figure 6.2). This image suggests that film, like words and food, can fill the mouth in a redemptive mourning process.



Figure 6.2: Alfredo projects films through a stone lion's head onto the screen of the Cinema Paradiso.

This lion comes alive in six-year-old Salvatore's imagination while he watches a newsreel on rallies for the successful Resistance in Rome between a double feature of a John Wayne film and Visconti's *La terra trema*. Critics have gone as far as to remark that *Cinema Paradiso* suffers

from a "lack of history" or even that there is "not a breath of fascism in the air" (qtd. in Radstone, 1995, p. 42). This scene and similar instances of film quoting, however, present pieces

of history through popular film's interaction with and interpretation of WWII conditions. *La terra trema* is a 1948 neorealist film that takes place in a small fishing village in Sicily, and follows working-class fishermen through a disastrous storm, the death of a grandfather, and the failure of a family business. The juxtaposition of this film, firmly rooted in the South and its immediate post-war struggles, with the newsreel emphasizes the South's isolation from the Northern Resistance movement. Further, the stark contrast between *La terra trema* and the John Wayne western draws attention to the Southern experience of the American presence. Although the war is over and the occupying Allies have left Sicily, their presence remains as American entertainment gains more and more prominence in Italy.

The movies again overlap with wartime reality later in the first act, when Salvatore watches a newsreel on the plight of Italian soldiers in Russia, where his own father served and perished. Immediately after the newsreel, Salvatore walks through the bombed-out streets of Giancaldo with his mother on their way back from confirming his father's death in Russia. Reacting to an earlier comment from Alfredo that Salvatore's father resembled Clark Gable, Salvatore's face lights up when he sees a tattered poster for *Gone with the Wind* on a destroyed building's wall. This is not the only instance in which Salvatore's father is associated with film. Earlier, in a fire caused by six-year-old Salvatore's collection of filmstrips, his mother is distressed that pictures of his deceased father have burned along with the film (Figure 6.3). This fire foreshadows the larger filmstrip fire that, at the end of the first act, engulfs the Cinema Paradiso and blinds Alfredo, drawing a parallel between his absent father and the father figure he finds in Alfredo.

Clark Gable's face on the poster, like the American western shown at the Cinema Paradiso, also suggests deeper implications of the Allies' enduring presence through popular

media; young Salvatore's memory has been shaped by American images to the point that he, to some extent, imagines his father as Clark Gable and vice versa. Along with the John Wayne film, this raises the question of who controlled the crafting of collective memory in the South in the years after WWII. Although *Cinema Paradiso* quotes *La terra trema* and other Southern neorealist classics, movies made in Hollywood and Rome increasingly dominate the film in the second act. Further, the only two newsreels quoted in the film appear next to these allusions to Hollywood actors and stories, implying perhaps non-Italian—and certainly non-Southern—influence in the creation of the Resistance myth. As part of the first generation whose collective memory was shaped by film, Salvatore is unable to mourn his experience of WWII because it conflicts with the story he has been told through this and other media. Similarly, he is ultimately unable to mourn his relationship with Alfredo because his revelation of Alfredo's dishonesty in the 1988 version conflicts with his memories of Alfredo as a father figure.

In his father's absence, Salvatore is virtually brought up by Alfredo, and by the cinema that Alfredo represents. Just as Alfredo stands in as a father figure, the cinema provides an



Figure 6.3: Alfredo holds a burnt picture of Salvatore's father in one hand and a singed piece of film in the other.

aesthetic environment of “maternal” handling (in the language of Bollas) in Salvatore’s youth. In tandem with the overdetermined focus on the lion’s mouth, a shot of a woman breastfeeding in the Cinema Paradiso’s auditorium emphasizes film’s role as an aesthetic environment in infancy and, later, a transformational object in adolescence and adulthood. The anonymous woman breastfeeds her baby during a showing of Mario Matolli’s 1948 comedy *I pompieri di Viggiù* (“The Firemen of Viggiu”), starring one of the most popular Italian film stars in history, Totò. Emphasizing the similarity between this star’s stage name and Salvatore’s childhood nickname, the Cinema Paradiso audience calls out “Totò!” during the film. *I pompieri di Viggiù* is playing as the Cinema Paradiso is engulfed in fire from the large filmstrip fire that blinds Alfredo, drawing obvious connections to *I pompieri di Viggiù*’s depiction of a group of bumbling firemen.

Without the extended plotline of the 1988 version, however, the 1989 version loses the subtleties of this instance of film quoting. This scene’s context—both in terms of the specificity of film quoting and its place in the 1989 plot—resonates with the idea of WWII as an additional aesthetic environment and “maternal” handler in conflict with the aesthetic environment created by Northern- and American-influenced popular media. *I pompieri di Viggiù* revolves around around Totò’s attempts to win the affections of a married woman. In a bizarre turn of events, Totò pretends to be a mannequin inhabited by the soul of the husband’s deceased father, and demands a kiss from the man’s wife. Both the 1988 and 1989 versions quote this specific scene. Just as Totò masquerades as the man’s deceased father as he tries to steal away his wife in *I pompieri di Viggiù*, Alfredo stands in for Salvatore’s deceased father as he meddles with his relationship with his relationship with Elena in the 1988 *Cinema Paradiso*. The conflict that is encoded, albeit unexpectedly and cryptically, in *I pompieri di Viggiù* precedes the destruction of the cinematic environment in which Salvatore has grown up.

I propose that the destruction of the Cinema Paradiso coincides with the destruction of Salvatore's ability to mourn WWII and his father's death in it. Early in both versions of the film, food—and thus its connections to eating and mourning—are associated with the building and the projection booth that the fire destroys. In the first act, six-year-old Salvatore lets his mother blame Alfredo for the fire started by the flammable filmstrips he left under his bed. When Salvatore sees Alfredo's wife bringing him lunch the next day, he uses the food as an excuse to get into the forbidden projection booth and apologize to Alfredo. Alfredo accepts his apology, and puts the food inside the projector to heat it up. The projector here prepares both food and film, the two primary objects of characters' and viewers' desire to consume and introject a loss.

In light of this analysis, critical designation of the Cinema Paradiso's "redeeming function of collective dreaming" (Marrone, 2010, p. 8) for the Giancaldo community takes on extended meaning. Parallels may be drawn between the destruction of the Cinema Paradiso, Alfredo's death, and the loss of the potential for "collective dreaming" in the South at the end of the Allied occupation. As part of the trend in which Italian cinema increasingly focused on history and memory in the 1990s, *Cinema Paradiso* presents an attempt to reconstruct collective identity in Italy's baby-boomer generation—that is, the generation that grew up in the war's aftermath and did not experience the war directly (Ferrero-Regis, 2002, p. 1). Rather than reshaping memories of WWII experiences, as films do for young Salvatore, *Cinema Paradiso* provides historical memory of WWII for a generation that does not have it to begin with.

For Salvatore's saga of blocked mourning to resonate with the Italian audience, it had to be excised from the film, as in the 1989 version, rather than explicitly told and acted out, as in the 1988 version. This can be viewed as symptomatic of a population that has experienced similar cryptic and silent stories through the collective transgenerational transmission of trauma.

The façade of successful mourning in the 1989 version, rather than the 1988 version's picture of a man who could not eat and thus could not mourn, invited a "starved" audience to play out their own fantasy of introjecting and coming to terms with the loss of collective dreaming that WWII occasioned.

Chapter Seven

Knowing and Not Knowing in *Tre fratelli*

In a classic example of Italian cinema's tendency to use the family as a paradigm for the nation, Francesco Rosi's *Tre fratelli* uses allegory to address the widespread terrorism Italy experienced throughout the 1970s. *Tre fratelli* was recognized both in Italy and internationally, garnering the *Nastro d'Argento* for Best Director and Actor, the Boston Society of Film Critics award for Best Foreign Film, and a nomination for Best Foreign Language Film at the 1981 Academic Awards. The film follows three estranged brothers as they return from different cities throughout Italy to their home in Calabria upon news of their mother Caterina's death, the mourning of which I will suggest is problematic. Both popular and academic critics interpret Rosi's allegory as straightforward and clear, with each of the three brothers' occupations and locations allegorizing a segment of Italy's society. Raffaele, the oldest, is a judge in Milan; Rocco, the middle brother, is a social worker in a juvenile correctional institution in Naples; and Nicola, the youngest, is a factory worker and union activist in Turin.

I will argue that Rocco, along with his father Donato and Nicola's daughter Marta, constitutes the symbolic heart of *Tre fratelli*. Throughout the film, Rocco is the least overtly political character among the three brothers. Instead, he is the character most implicated in the psychoanalytic aspects of the film: dreams, flashbacks, and nightmares. With careful reading of Rocco's character, the extended metaphors within *Tre fratelli* trace the story of Rocco's secret about Caterina; food consumption's role as a symptom of Rocco's blocked mourning of her death; and "cyclical" connections between WWII, the Italian Constitution of 1947, and the political situation of the early 1980s.

This analysis will proceed in three main parts. First, after identifying invitations to

anasemic analysis, I will propose a reading of *Tre fratelli* focused on Rocco's perspective and the blocked mourning of his mother. Next I will extend this analysis to Rocco's father Donato as another representation of an inability to mourn. This section will also elaborate the ways in which Nicola and Raffaele's discussions about food and infidelity contour both Rocco's and Donato's characters. Finally, I will use this anasemic reading to draw connections between Caterina's death and the liberation of the South in the specific context of the early-1980s political environment in which *Tre fratelli* was released.

The film's first scene indicates the analytical strategy that *Tre fratelli* requires. The film opens on a bleak view of a cement wall with empty windows, then cuts to a ground-level shot of rats scavenging through burning trash. The sound of a heartbeat and foreboding music accompany the scene, until an alarm clock sounds and prompts a sudden close-up of Rocco waking up in his room at the juvenile correctional institution. This nightmare of Rocco's opens the film, and his dream—a pop-utopia in which children set fire to syringes, pistols, uniforms, and cash against a changing backdrop of skyscrapers, churches, and the bay of Naples—ends it. *Tre fratelli* is thus bracketed by references to the unconscious, and privileges depiction of Rocco's unconscious over that of his brothers.

This bracketing could be interpreted as a positive progression throughout the film from nightmare to dream, with the former representing social “rot” and the latter representing the obliteration of corruption and violence. Close attention to the mise-en-scene in each, however, reveals Rosi's trademark manipulation of multiple temporal dimensions:

In Rosi's films, the representation of time was never linear, but rather, a relationship of coexistence of multiple timelines. In the southern Italy of his films, time did not exist: his timelines mixed and blended together with reversibility and irreversibility, circularity and linearity, dynamics of modernity and the static reality of mythology. (Brunetta 2009, 159).

In a decidedly non-linear representation, the final scene of the film actually *precedes* the first. The pile of “trash” that the children set on fire in the final dream scene eventually burns into embers, and rats rummage around the aftermath in the opening nightmare scene.

This temporal flexibility sets the tone for the continuity Rosi establishes among certain characters: namely, Marta and Caterina, and Donato and Rocco. Numerous analyses have commented on the symbolic association between Marta and her deceased grandmother Caterina, most commonly taking note of the symbolic parallels between a scene of Caterina digging through the sand on a beach and of Marta playing in the grain in Donato’s house’s attic (e.g. Testa, 2007; Quart & Quart, 1982). Further examination of the grain scene reveals a more connotative parallel. Marta looks down from an interior attic window on the mourning scene: Caterina’s body on a bed, surrounded by women dressed in black and praying rosaries, as her sons and husband watch. As Marta peeks from the attic (Figure 7.1) the camera switches to a vantage point that is roughly Caterina’s point of view, in which the only visible part of Caterina is her shoes. Earlier in Marta’s exploration of the attic she runs across a pair of empty shoes. While the English idiomatic expression “shoes to fill” does not translate into Italian, the juxtaposition of Caterina’s absence and presence through the image of black shoes nevertheless emphasizes Marta’s connection to her.

Later in the film, a shot of Marta and Donato lying next to each other in Caterina and Donato’s bed cues Donato’s memories of his and Caterina’s wedding and honeymoon at the beach. Marta and Donato are seen in this shot through a decorative hole in the bed’s headboard (Figure 7.2). In both of the memories, the young Donato is played by the same actor who plays the adult Rocco. This also occurs in Rocco’s flashback about the liberation of their village by the Allies during WWII, which begins with a close-up of young Rocco’s face as he fearfully watches

the violence through the gap formed by his mother's arm around him (Figure 7.3). After the gunshots stop and bells start ringing, Rocco looks out a window at white flags waving around the village. The family cautiously approaches an Allied tank, and the apparently Italian-American soldier who emerges kisses the ground and says, "*Oppure io sono un italiano!*" (I'm an Italian like you!") The soldier and the family members start hugging each other and celebrating, and the shot ends with the soldier embracing Caterina. This flashback is cued by Rocco and the viewer's first sight of Caterina's dead body at the mourning; the shot cuts from a close-up of the deceased Caterina's face to young Rocco's frightened face.

The motif of looking *through* holes or gaps at a partially unseen or obscured object joins these scenes. Marta looks through a window at Caterina's body; the camera looks through the headboard at Marta (in Caterina's place) and Donato; and a young Rocco watches the violence of war through his mother's embrace. Across these scenes, Rocco is predominantly *looking* and Caterina is predominantly *being seen*. This motif recalls the film's opening scene, Rocco's nightmare, in which the empty windows appear to *look* down on the rats and trash below. The Italian word for rat, *ratto*, is also a literary term for "rape" or "abduction." If we apply the motif of Rocco looking and Caterina being seen, this sequence implies that Rocco witnessed or had knowledge of Caterina in a sexually compromising situation: while the nightmare specifies rape, there is a possibility of an affair, prostitution, or another episode he may not have completely understood as a child. This obscurity and lack of clarity contributes to Rocco's inability to mourn his mother's death.

Rocco's blockage to mourning comes not only from the unclear or even taboo nature of his mother's secret, but also from the burden of keeping this secret from his father. Recurring instances of food coinciding with discussion of infidelity throughout the film suggest that Rocco



Figure 7.1:
Marta looks down from the attic of Donato's house at the room in which Caterina's body lies.



Figure 7.2:
Marta and Donato lie next to each other in bed before Donato falls asleep and dreams of his and Caterina's wedding.



Figure 7.3:
When he first sees Caterina's body, Rocco flashes back to a childhood memory of his village's liberation by the Allies. His flashback begins with this shot of him looking through his mother's embrace.

has kept knowledge of Caterina's perceived violation from his father. When Nicola tells Raffaele about his failed marriage, he describes his and his Northern wife's disagreements about whether to put butter and cheese or tomatoes on macaroni before abruptly revealing to Raffaele that she had cheated on him. When Nicola points out that his wife told him about her infidelity, Raffaele replies, "*Per me, questa la ti prova che ti voglia bene. Perche, non dimenticare se una donna vuole, riesce nasconderti tutto.*" ("That's a sign of love. If a woman wants, she can hide anything.") Moments later Nicola lies to Donato about his wife's absence from the wake, saying that she had to attend to her sister in the hospital. When Marta questions his lie in private, Nicola tells her, "*Il nonno soffre già abbastanza. Certe cose meglio che non le sappia.*" ("Grandpa is suffering very much. It's better if he doesn't know such things.") These interactions draw attention to the possibility that Caterina hid secrets from Donato, and to the sons' tendency to hide things from him as well. It also points to Rocco's possible motivation: to protect his father from painful or disruptive information.

Nicola's dream about reconciliation with his wife strengthens this symbolic connection between food and infidelity. He meets his wife in a plain, sterile apartment building not unlike the one in the film's first scenes. She offers him food and coffee, and he replies that he's not hungry with an angry "*non mi serve niente*" ("don't bother"). They discuss Marta's knowledge of her mother's affair, with Nicola thinking that Marta is unaware of the situation. His wife is incredulous, telling him, "*La bambina ha capito piu di quanto doveva capire. Sei tu chi sei ingenuo.*" ("The girl understood more than she should have. It's you who's naïve."¹) This exchange brings into focus the inscribed narrative of a child witnessing a mother's unspoken actions, and of a father's ignorance. This is confirmed by a scene that takes place immediately

¹ My translation.

after Rocco's opening dream, in which a police officer approaches him about a problem with the children at the correctional institution stealing as the children watch from an upper-story window. This brief scene at the beginning of the film, utilizing the looking/being seen motif, calls attention to children *stealing*—that is, children having something that they should not have. In a reversal of generation roles, then, Marta and Rocco are the children who have too much information, while Nicola and Donato are the fathers who do not have enough.

Compared to Rocco, whose knowledge of Caterina's sexual but unclear secret complicates his ability to mourn her, Donato's *ignorance* stands in the way of his mourning. Marta and Donato are excluded from Caterina's funeral at the end of the film. When Marta asks why they are not going to the funeral, Donato responds, "*Non lo so. Hanno detto che era meglio così.*" ("I don't know. They said it was better this way."²) Donato's exclusion from the funeral, and his confusion as to the reasons for his exclusion, line up with the idea of the brothers protecting him from painful information or experiences. Although he is once removed from the traumatic knowledge that plagues Rocco, he feels the consequences of Caterina's unspeakable actions in the unidentifiable tension that stands between him and Rocco.

When Donato goes back into the house he opens the window of the room in which Caterina's body previously lay and looks out at the funeral procession, further enforcing the looking/being seen motif. In the film's final moments, he places Caterina's wedding ring on his finger next to his own. Similar to the inescapable cycle suggested by Rocco's dream and nightmare, the closed circle of the ring is emblematic of the closed cycle of the transgenerational transmission of a secret. As long as the cycle remains closed and unbroken, the secret will endure. This legacy relates to transgenerational transmission of trauma as the proposed source of

² My translation.

ED pathology in southern Italy.

Donato's interaction with food further contours this representation of blocked mourning. While the brothers talk about a recent UNICEF report on child labor in the kitchen, the camera remains focused on Donato as he eats bread at the table. The brothers, meanwhile, are too absorbed in their debate to notice. Donato is trying to eat, and thus symbolically trying to mourn, but his silence amid his sons' political debates signals that he is unable to speak with them. Thus, without a possibility for engaging in a "communion of empty mouths" with his sons, his introjection is not complete. Further, in the film's final scene, Rosi equates the consumption of food with healthy mourning. As the three brothers carry Caterina's coffin away from the family home, Marta and Donato walk away from the funeral procession and back to the house. Marta finds an egg in the grass and hands it to Donato in a close-up of his hand. The fact that the egg comes from Marta, the stand-in for the deceased Caterina, further connects it to the symbolic introjection of Caterina's death. While the brothers participate in a mourning ritual offscreen, it is unclear whether Donato will cook the egg or leave it outside where Marta found it. This underscores the ambiguous and incomplete nature of Donato's mourning process.

This psychoanalytic reading up possibilities for political readings that extend beyond allegorizing the three brothers. The fact that Rocco's WWII flashback is cued by the sight of the deceased Caterina's face implicitly links the death of Caterina with the Allied invasion and liberation of the South. The link between Caterina's death and the liberation of the South suggests a link between the problematic mourning of each. Just as the ambiguous secret of *ratto* stands in the way of the brothers' mourning Caterina's death, the conflicts and contradictions of the Southern experience of WWII prevent the South from partaking in the national narrative of the war. The looking/being seen motif that ties together these symbols places overdetermined

focus on holes and gaps, which implicates the gaps in articulation and expression that are characteristic of transgenerational transmission of trauma. The most notable gap is perhaps the complete lack of Caterina's point of view from *Tre fratelli*. Brief suggestions of the female perspective—such as the shot in which the deceased Caterina appears to be looking down at her own shoes—open up the possibility of contouring the film's male-dominated narrative. What Rocco understood as a violation may have been a pleasurable affair, for example. Without the fulfillment of that perspective, however, the ambiguity surrounding the specific meaning of Caterina's *ratto* remains. Similarly, without fuller integration of marginalized perspectives in Italy's national narrative of WWII, the traumas of WWII remain unresolved.

The egg that Marta gives to Donato as they walk away from Caterina's funeral has further political symbolic meaning. Testa (2007) interprets it as a symbol for new political life or a "rebirth" of Italian politics via "the democratic-republican ideals of mutual tolerance and coexistence" in Italy's 1947 constitution (p. 785). When viewed in the context of the above anasemic analysis, this symbol's implications extend to the continuity between Caterina and Marta. Marta's discovery of the egg may imply, as Testa and others argue, that she and the next generation are responsible for promoting the ideals of the Italian Republic. However, with knowledge of her symbolic associations with Caterina, and then of Caterina's association with the liberated South, Marta's possession of "the egg" of the 1947 constitution may be read as indicative of the constitution's *origins* in post-WWII society.

The 1947 constitution was the result of the constitutional referendum of 1946, in which Italians voted to dissolve the monarchy and replace the defeated Kingdom of Italy with the Italian Republic. In this popular referendum, however, Southerners overwhelmingly voted to maintain the monarchy. Between 1943 and 1945, the monarchy, which had played a key role in

the first fall of Mussolini, was confined to the South under protection of Allied forces. During that same time, the North was occupied by the Germans and under the control of Hitler's puppet state with Mussolini at the helm. Almost all of the political forces behind the organization of the Resistance in the North were anti-monarchy, adding to the sense of the South's preclusion from the movement. The 1946 referendum's results further complicated the collective humiliation and conflict characteristic of the Southern experience of WWII's end.

The film's positioning at the beginning of the 1980s supports a connection to immediate post-WWII politics. The early 1980s coincided with the height of political violence in the country, and the three brothers each represent specific aspects of the time period: judges' attempts to be impartial in their rulings at the risk of demotion or death; the battle against drug abuse and violence in the younger generations; and the mounting power of labor unions in the rapidly growing manufacturing sector. The brothers also represent the conflict between equally extreme revolutionary groups and "law-and-order extremists" and their conflicting plans for resolution (Testa, 2007, p. 785). Marta, as a stand-in for Caterina and pre-liberation Italy, conclusively holds the symbolic constitution in her hand, each representing a conflicting and seemingly unattainable ideal: Marta, the lost possibilities of prosperity for the wartime South under the monarchy; and the egg she holds, the increasingly false promise of the First Republic.

Here Rocco's circuitous opening nightmare (Figure 7.5) and closing dream (Figure 7.4) take on yet deeper significance. His dream employs obvious symbols of the conflicting discourses of the 1980s: syringes stand in for drug abuse, pistols for violence, soldiers' uniforms for military and police misconduct, cash for political corruption, skyscrapers for rapid modernization, and churches for the ever-present influence of Catholicism. He smiles and laughs as children—representative of Marta's generation—literally sweep these problems away. But, in

an inescapable cycle, this political dream burns off into the psychoanalytical nightmare that opens the film and inscribes a complex and unclear family secret. At the core of the tensions and issues of the 1980s are the obscured traumas experienced in the South during WWII. Thus, through intertwining levels of narrative emphasized by food symbology, *Tre fratelli* identifies the root of enduring collective maladies—such as Italian



Figure 7.4: Against an urban backdrop of skyscrapers, the children of Rocco's correctional institutional sweep away Italy's social problems.

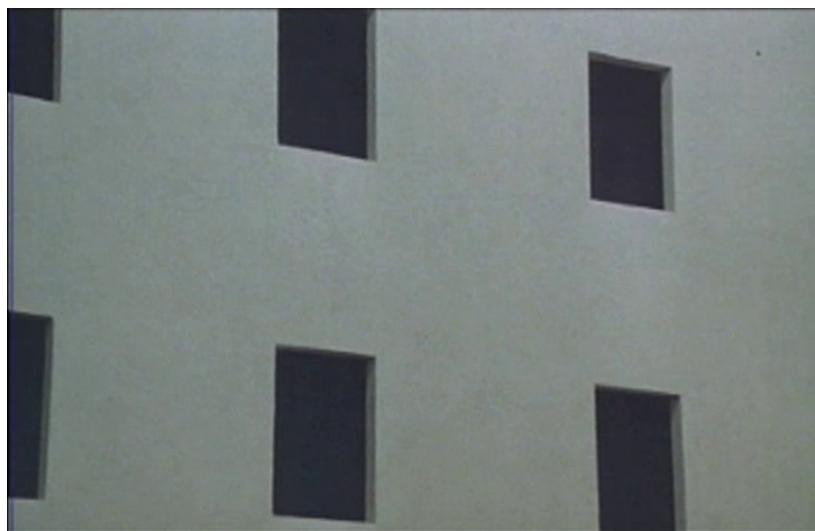


Figure 7.5: The opening nightmare scene begins with a stark concrete building reminiscent of the plain buildings and windows in Rocco's dream.

political tensions and Southern-specific ED pathologies—as the absence of clarifying perspectives. Just as Donato and Rocco cannot move past Caterina's death without fuller knowledge of her secret, the nation cannot move past the traumas of WWII without incorporation of the Southern perspective in national memory.

Chapter Eight

Diseased Dual Unity and Food Rejection in *L'amore molesto*

Mario Martone's *L'amore molesto* presents the most psychoanalytically complex, and also most inviting, text in this study. In addition to a Palme D'or nomination at the 1995 Cannes Film Festival and three David di Donatello awards, *L'amore molesto* has received wide praise for its exemplary use and revision of the conventions of the then-emerging New Neapolitan Cinema movement (Marlow-Mann, 1999). The film follows protagonist Delia as she travels from Bologna to her hometown of Naples to investigate the death of her mother, Amalia. Instead of clarifying the mysterious circumstances of Amalia's death, however, Delia's return to Naples unleashes previously repressed memories of her childhood. Through flashback and dreams, the viewer learns that Delia's father was abusive and protective of Amalia, and that their relationship deteriorated when Delia lied to her father and told him she had seen Amalia and their neighbor Caserta engaged in sexual activity in the basement of Caserta's father's sweet shop. The film's final scenes reveal the more terrible truth: Delia was actually abused in the basement by Caserta's father, and she told the lie about her mother and Caserta to block out her own traumatic experience.

Most analyses of *L'amore molesto* take for granted the veracity of Delia's point of view, especially her childhood abuse and its revelation at the film's conclusion. The patterns of the film suggest otherwise: repeated dreams, memories, and flashbacks imply the subjective nature of Delia's recollections; a cameo of a Pinocchio doll in Delia's arms in the film's opening dream sequence indicates not only her tendency to lie but her inner awareness of that tendency; and the

overdetermined motif of Delia's eyeglasses calls attention to Delia's poor vision and frequent uncertainty about what she is seeing. As the mystery of Amalia's death unfolds, the viewer knows "what Delia knows and nothing more" (Marlow-Mann, 2009, p. 204). This results in Delia's point of view dominating the epistemology of the film

I propose that the viewer must consider the possibility of Delia's own self-deception throughout the film, and that interrogation of Delia's point of view has the potential to reveal deeper aspects of the film's concerns beyond its already-complex plot. Rather than taking Delia's point of view at face value, close textual analysis reveals *L'amore molesto* as a tale not of Delia's efforts to uncover the secret of her mother's death, but of her struggle to preserve the secret of her own origins. Her rejection of food throughout the film links this pathology of blocked mourning with pathologies of disordered eating. This interpretation lays the foundation for a viewing of *L'amore molesto* as indicative of the illegibility and uncertainty surrounding the southern WWII experience.

The first part of this analysis will be concerned with an anasemic reading of *L'amore molesto* to reveal the pathological secret that prevents Delia from mourning Amalia's death. Delia's rejection of food throughout the film is vital to this analysis. With an anasemic reading established, I will then propose a new historical reading of the film connecting the character of Caserta with the historical significance of the southern city of Caserta in the Allied invasion of southern Italy. This analysis will extend to the 1990s political conditions against which *L'amore molesto* takes place, including Naples's landmark 1993 gubernatorial elections and the collapse of the First Republic.

L'amore molesto's first scenes invite anasemic analysis, and establish the symbolic significance of food in the unhealthy mother-daughter dynamic between Delia and Amalia. The

film opens with a monochromatic dream sequence in which a young Delia watches from the window of the family apartment in Naples as her aunt spoon-feeds her sister Rosaria. Delia leans out the window and yells to Rosaria that their mother wants to know if she's finished, prompting Rosaria to grab the bowl of food and run off-screen. Pinocchio doll in hand, Delia displays jealousy when Rosaria appears in the apartment with an empty bowl and praise for a "good appetite" from her aunt. This foreshadows a later flashback scene in which young Delia is again at the window, this time breaking pasta and muttering about killing Amalia as she watches her walk away from the apartment building. The dream sequence ends with a shot from Delia's point of view of Amalia sewing by the window, with the billowing window curtains occasionally obscuring her from view. This "visual memory of...losing and retrieving her mother" foreshadows the rest of the film and its "fantasy of compensatory control" (Riccobono, 2010, p. 445). Delia is jealous, angry, and above all overprotective of Amalia, holding her in an adoring but controlling gaze even after her mysterious death.

This dream sequence is followed by the adult Delia waking up in her apartment in Bologna to Amalia offering her coffee and food. This scene transitions into the rest of the film in what the viewer is led to believe is Delia's objective, waking life. However, within minutes the viewer can surmise that Amalia has died in Naples, and could not have possibly been in Delia's apartment in Bologna that morning. The film never accounts for or even calls attention to this hallucination, raising the question of whether the subjective dreams in *L'amore molesto* extend beyond the opening sequence and other visually announced (via a monochromatic color scheme) dream scenes. This element of unrecognized and unresolved hallucination is symptomatic of Delia's inability to separate herself from or bury her mother, resulting in her being haunted by the "ghost," or phantom, of Amalia. Abraham and Torok (1972) posit that the appearance of a

ghost, such as Amalia's appearance in this scene, is indicative of an intrapsychic conflict; Amalia's appearance in Delia's unconscious indicates the presence of a secret that prevents Delia from mourning her death.

To understand what brings Delia to this haunted state, it is helpful to situate her blocked mourning in the theory of "dual unity" between child and mother. Similar to Bollas's theories, the "mother" refers to any maternal or handling presence. In cases of healthy development, a person is "gradually defined by the constant process of differentiation or 'division' from a...primary union: the mother" (Rashkin, 1988, p. 34). Healthy introjection, the process by which one digests and mourns a loss, is the mechanism of by which this separation, or individuation, occurs. Similar to Bollas's idea of the creation of an aesthetic environment through unconscious and non-verbal idioms of care, Rashkin (1988) describes the "maternal unconscious" as the primary informer of the "newly formed unconscious of the child" (p. 40). The individual thus emerges as a "mother-amputee": having slowly separated from the unconscious mother/child union, the mature individual still carries within him or herself traces of the mother's aesthetic.

Unhealthy, or "diseased," dual unity, on the other hand, occurs when the mother's unspoken secret—often described as a "gap" in the unconscious environment transmitted from mother to child—is transmitted nonverbally from the mother's unconscious to the child's. The child will inherit not only unconscious knowledge of the mother's secret, but also an imperative to preserve that secret (Rashkin, 1988). The spontaneous process of introjection is then thwarted because, instead of separating from the mother and emerging as an individual, a child in possession of his or her mother's secret will only allow experiences and introjections that keep the secret intact. This silent partnership between mother and child in the preservation of a

shameful secret precludes normal processes of individuation. As the following will demonstrate, Delia is not able to bury Amalia, because her introjection of Amalia's death would threaten the shameful secret she is obliged to protect. I propose that this secret is one of Delia's origins: that her biological father is not who she thinks he is. Here Delia's state of diseased dual unity with her mother takes on extended meaning: as the product of an illegitimate affair, Delia herself is the walking incarnation of the consequences of her mother's untold secret.

Delia's markedly depersonalized state at the film's conclusion attests to the possibility that her problematic mourning is related to a shared unspeakable secret with her mother. On a train from Naples to Bologna, in a seat facing the back of the train, Delia concludes her detective work by imagining Amalia's last hours, and Caserta's presence in them, as joyful and innocent. Consistent with the evidence she has uncovered throughout the film, she has solved the mystery of her mother's death to her own satisfaction. We have watched Delia convince herself of a subjective truth, and here—facing Naples but moving towards Bologna—we see the conclusion of her pathological refusal to mourn and bury Amalia. Then, in the final line of the film, she introduces herself as “Amalia” after altering her own ID card to resemble Amalia.

Delia's gradual transformation into Amalia leading up to this final scene is symptomatic of the fact that she never individuated and became fully autonomous from her mother to begin with. Delia has never *not* been in state of a unity with her mother, and Amalia's death is a trigger for her expression of that diseased dual unity. In a symptom of her failure to introject Amalia's passing, Delia slowly starts to take on aspects of her mother's appearance: first by applying her mother's make-up in her apartment, then by swapping her androgenous blue clothing for Amalia's red dress (Figure 8.1), and finally by assuming Amalia's name.

Delia's rejection of food throughout the film reveals her efforts to preserve rather than uncover a secret. Because she is obligated to avoid any introjection that will disturb her mother's secret, her refusal to eat symbolizes her refusal to process her mother's death. The recurrent phrase "*prenderlo nella bocca*" – "put it in your mouth"¹ – cryptically speaks to Delia's inability to participate in a "communion of mouths" and metaphorically introject. Delia hears Amalia utter the phrase in one of her last phone calls to Delia, remembers hearing Amalia say it in a childhood memory, and associates it with memories of sexual abuse at the hands of Caserta's grandfather. Given the significance of the mouth in introjection, the negative connotations of this



Figure 8.1: After putting on her mother's red dress, Delia runs through the rainy streets of Naples in pursuit of Caserta.

phrase signal Delia's unwillingness to put in her mouth the words—or foods—that may speak of her mother's secret.

Delia's rejection of food throughout the film specifies the nature of the secret she is trying to preserve. Delia vomits when she discovers a men's shirt in Amalia's apartment the day after her death, rejecting both the food in her stomach and the possibilities of her mother's

sexuality. Delia's later aversion to the sweet food Uncle Filippo offers her at his apartment is especially informative. She refuses excess sugar in her coffee, chooses bread over cookies, and

¹ My translation.

hesitates at jam even though Filippo advises, “*Se levi la muffa sopra, la parte sotto è squisita.*” (“If you take the mold off the top, it’s delicious.”²) As they eat, Filippo tells Delia that she resembles Amalia more than her other two sisters do. They proceed to argue about Filippo’s complacency in domestic abuse against Amalia during Delia’s childhood, and of Caserta’s interaction with the family during that time; Delia points out that Caserta fed the family during the war. Delia’s rejection of sweet foods during this conversation draws a strong connection to the candy shop in which Delia’s memory of sexual abuse takes place.

This draws attention to the Naples neighborhood in which the sweet shop is located, often called *il ventre di Napoli*, or the “belly” or “womb” of Naples. This linguistic evidence suggests the location of the source of Delia’s rejection of food: her mother. When Delia earlier discovers a men’s shirt during the initial visit to Amalia’s apartment that caused her to vomit, it cues a hallucination similar to the one described in the film’s first sequences: the deceased Amalia interacts with Delia with no filmic recognition of or explanation for her presence. Delia asks her mother if she has been seeing anyone in the past few years, and Amalia denies it. Amalia then tells Delia to touch her belly, and the vision ends with Delia coiling back, repulsed and afraid. In keeping with Abraham and Torok’s theory that haunting is a mechanism of *preserving* an intrapsychic secret, the return of Amalia’s “ghost” in Delia’s unconscious may be interpreted as a reminder to Delia of the specific nature of the secret she is obligated to keep (Rashkin, 1988). The location of the offensive sweet shop thus points cryptically to the real site of Delia’s aversion: the womb. Her dream encounter with Amalia explicitly illustrates this cryptic evidence, suggesting that the secret that Delia is obligated to protect has something to do with the belly, the womb, and even (due to the sexual connotation of the sweet shop in Delia’s memory) pregnancy.

² My translation.

The thread of Delia's objection—from sweet foods, to the sweet shop, to the city of Naples, to her mother's body—supports this interpretation.

With this in mind, additional elements of the film's plot and cinematography take on new meaning to co-symbolize with the specific content of this secret—that is, the identity of Delia's real biological father. Based on the following clues, I propose that *L'amore molesto* is a saga of Delia's efforts to repress this knowledge. In *L'amore molesto*'s first scenes, a seemingly unnecessary and inexplicable announcement via superimposed text that the film begins on Delia's birthday puts focus on her birth and origins. Further, her revelatory visit to the sweet shop—in which childhood memories of her abuse at the hands of Caserta's father surface—in the film's penultimate scene implicates Delia as the child *inside* the womb: after going to the “womb” neighborhood, she descends into the dark basement of the sweet shop.

In the basement of the sweet shop, Delia seemingly encounters memories of the lie that she told her father about seeing Amalia and Caserta together, and then of the repressed memory of her childhood abuse at the hands of Caserta's grandfather. This is most often interpreted as a removal of a “screen” memory: instead of the lie she told about Caserta and her mother, she now sees the repressed truth about Caserta's father and herself. The composition of the scene—in which the viewer sees flashbacks of Amalia being approached by Caserta alternating and overlapping with flashbacks of a young Delia being approached by Caserta's grandfather — superficially supports this interpretation. A closer reader of the visual language of this scene, however, confirms a reading pertaining to fatherhood and Delia's origins. As Delia imagines Caserta walking through the door to lay with her mother, the blurry image comes into focus and she sees Caserta's father walking through the door to lay with her (Figure 8.2). The shadowy image of Caserta walking through the door recalls an earlier flashback scene in which Delia

remembers her father emerging from a dark tunnel (Figure 8.3), aligning visions of a leering Caserta with visions of her father.

The film seems to revolve around the lie Delia told in her childhood—that she saw Amalia cheating on her father with Caserta—to cover up and repress an uglier truth—that she was molested by Caserta’s father. But this revelation, in the penultimate scene of *L’amore*

Figure 8.2:

In a blurry flashback, Delia imagines Caserta walking toward her mother. When the image comes into focus, it becomes clear that the figure is actually Caserta’s father walking toward her.

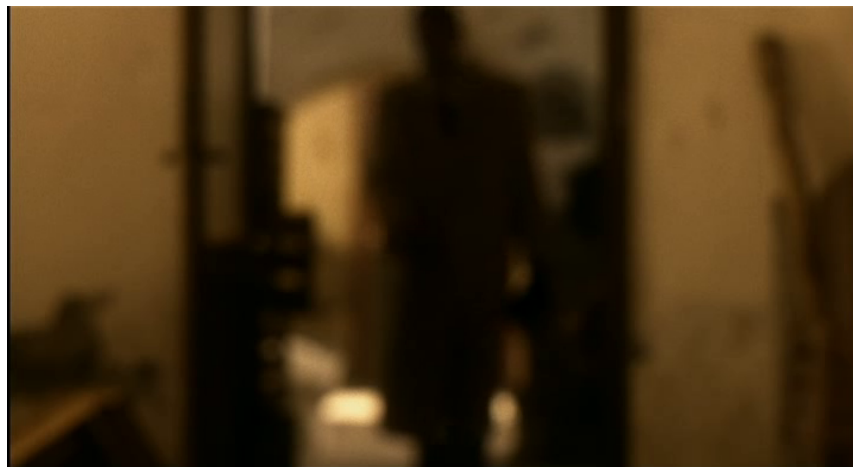


Figure 8.3:

In a flashback to her childhood, Delia remembers a mysterious man pursuing her and Amalia through a tunnel. Only when they emerge from the shadows of the tunnel does it become clear that it is her father.



molesto, has no evidence other than its finality that it is not just as delusional as Delia’s other dreams and flashbacks throughout the film. Instead, I have shown that Delia’s childhood lie was more likely symptomatic of her inheritance of, and then her obligation to cover up, the even more pathologically shameful secret of her origins. Rather than projecting her childhood abuse onto Amalia, Delia has imagined her mother and Caserta in association with herself and a

repulsive father. Her lie may have been a cryptic attempt to remove Caserta from her family's life and thus remove reminders of her mother's shameful secret, or to fantasize an affair that had a precise beginning and ending rather than the ongoing relationship of which she was a product.

In a reference that is anything but obscure, Caserta's character is named for the southern Italian city which served as the seat of the Supreme Allied Commander at the end of WWII, and in which the Nazis finally surrendered to the Allies in April 1945. With the character of Caserta standing in for the Allies and then for the end of WWII, and the city of Naples (with all of its feminine connotations and association with Amalia the mother) standing in for the South, *L'amore molesto* emerges as a cryptic narrative about the illegibility of the WWII experience. The psychoanalytic interpretation of the film above informs this historic reading. Throughout the film Caserta intersects with the recurring motif of Delia's glasses. In the revelatory scene in the basement of the sweet shop, she takes off her glasses upon entering, and her "screen" memory of a leering Caserta is fuzzy and out of focus. Earlier in the film, as she



Figure 8.4: Delia, locked behind the external gates of her mother apartment building, watches Caserta run away down the street.

chases Caserta through the streets of Naples, her eyeglasses fall and break.

In tandem with not being able to see Caserta, the film raises the question of whether Delia is able to understand Caserta as

well; the innocent Caserta she imagines in the film's last scene on the train contrasts with the

villainous Caserta presented throughout the rest of the film. Delia cannot ascertain or decide the extent of Caserta's guilt, unsure of whether he killed her mother or tried to save her. Mention of the fact that Caserta fed Delia and her family during the war further complicates his character. This fact sheds light on his character's connection to the city of Caserta and the seat of Allied operations; just as Caserta the character fed Delia's family during the war, the operations emanating from the city of Caserta "fed" the South during the war by stimulating the economy. This tension aligns with historical conceptions of the Allied presence in the South, with constantly shifting uncertainty of whether the Allies were invaders, liberators, or occupiers.

Martone's vertical conception of the city of Naples not only breaks tradition with previous Neapolitan cinema, but also provides psychogeographical context to the proposed connection among Caserta, the Allied presence, and the traumatic war's end to which it led. Caserta negotiates stairs, elevators, and hills with ease, while Delia finds herself repeatedly trapped behind gates in spaces that are "horizontally enclosed but vertically spacious" (Marlow-Mann, 2009, p. 209). This verticality constructs Naples as an oppressive space from which Delia cannot escape, but in which Caserta can move freely (Figure 8.4). As the viewer is invited to identify with Delia throughout the film, a likely aesthetic effect may be to recall the South after WWII as oppressive and inescapable, and recall the Allies as the ones who more capably moved in, out of, and around the region.

L'amore molesto is firmly anchored in the 1990s, especially in terms of the watershed gubernatorial election of 1993. Posters advertising the party and television reports on the election both make appearances in the film. The film was made months after Antonio Bassolino narrowly defeated Alessandro Mussolini, and points out the precarious conditions that prevailed in Naples at the time (O'Healy, 1999). This time period also represents the historical moment in which the

First Republic, established in the aftermath of WWII, collapsed following the *mani pulite* (“clean hands”) bribery scandals, ushering Italy into an era of hectic transition. Martone’s focus on the Naples gubernatorial election highlights the political volatility, patriarchal political system, and institutional corruption that plagued the city.

From the viewpoint of early 1990s society, then, the years following WWII represented a moment of great national potential and opportunity that, ultimately, failed. As discussed in the previous chapter on *Tre fratelli*, the South-specific dimensions of the defeat of the monarchy and adoption of the constitution of the First Republic contour this experience. Delia’s multiple imaginings of Caserta—as intrusive familial presence, as suitor, as murderer, as father—reflect Italian society’s conflicting conceptions of the end of WWII and its political outcomes as they came to a catastrophic conclusion in 1993.

Delia’s story of being haunted by a truth only her unconscious knows—her attempt to rewrite the trauma and shame of her origins and thus of the diagetetic trajectory of her life—perhaps resonated with this moment when Italians were collectively questioning the origins of the collapsing Republic. Just as psychoanalytic analysis of *L’amore molesto* yields a secret about Delia’s origins, historical analysis then suggests that political anxieties in the early 1990s relate to the problematic origins of the establishment of the Italian Republic. Most significantly, Delia navigates this conflict and personal re-creation with the rejection of food as a vehicle for the expression of frustration, shame, aggression, and control in her relationship with her origins. Because Delia is haunted by a secret not her own, she rejects the specific foods associated with that secret. Just as the varied political consequences of WWII’s aftermath resonated with an early 1990s audience, Delia’s struggles resonate with food’s emotional and symbolic role in the blocked mourning of those consequences.

Chapter Nine

Conclusions

The goal of this thesis has been to establish that the high rates and unique profile of ED in southern Italy stem from the conflicted Southern experience of WWII trauma and its incomplete mourning. Each film analysis sheds light on different aspects of this argument: *La Famiglia*'s exclusion of WWII and motif of interrupted meals drew connections from disrupted eating and ED to disrupted introjection and blocked mourning; the cuts between the 1988 and 1989 versions of *Cinema Paradiso* created a film that resonated more deeply with baby-boomer audiences desiring a redemptive experience of introjection via film, and aligned an inability to eat with an inability to undergo that redemptive introjection; the inscribed secret of a mother's *ratto* in *Tre fratelli* illuminated the film's political allegory as well as calling attention to a father's confusion about his inability to eat or mourn with his sons; and, finally, the episodes of food rejection in *L'amore molesto* indicated an intrapsychic secret which, when applied to the political symbols of the film, underscored the illegibility of the WWII experience. The four films analyzed in this thesis, while not a large enough sample to be considered representative of the wide body of southern Italian film, encompass a sufficient breadth of themes and tensions to be of indicative hermeneutic value.

As a group, these films call attention to two central tenets of trauma theory: temporality, and lack of resolution. Each of the films in this study deals with temporality: *Tre fratelli* utilizes non-linear representations of time; *Cinema Paradiso* consistently returns to the sound and image of bells to mark both the passage of time and the beginning and ending of memories; *L'amore molesto*'s main character confuses the past with the present; and *La famiglia* proceeds in 10-year intervals. Each film, with different cinematographic tools, calls attention to the passing of time

and, most importantly, the way the past *lives on* through memories, flashbacks, dreams, and other unconscious mechanisms. In each film, the past is not yet finished or resolved for the protagonist. Each film is “haunted” by this lack of resolution in different ways. Pivotal traumatic experiences are removed from the cinematic text by the internal editing of Carlo’s memories in *La famiglia*, and by the external editing of a producer in the 1989 version of *Cinema Paradiso*. In *Tre fratelli* and *L’amore molesto*, however, such traumatic experiences remain in the text as cryptic secrets, available to the viewer only through careful reading and anasemic analysis.

Although all four films concern blocked mourning of unresolved traumas, they do not allegorize in the same way. The most distinctive outlier is *Cinema Paradiso*, the more popular version of which depicts superficially successful mourning of the loss of a romantic possibility and a parental figure. The other three films in this sample are argued to have resonated with ED pathologies because they depict *unsuccessful* mourning. The 1989 version of *Cinema Paradiso* was successful because it offered introjection to an audience for which introjection was blocked; the other three films, in contrast, resonated with audiences because they depicted a kind of blocked introjection that audiences recognized. This difference illuminates the way in which similar conflicts and aesthetics can resonate with audiences through contrasting narrative avenues.

The varieties of heterosexual romantic betrayal depicted in all four films—an affair in *La famiglia*, a sabotaged relationship in *Cinema Paradiso*, an unclear sexual deviation in *Tre fratelli*, and an illegitimate child in *L’amore molesto*—all involve a woman whose perspective is silenced. In *La Famiglia* and *Tre fratelli*, these women—Beatrice and Caterina, respectively—have passed away before the beginning of the film, and the viewer must rely on male protagonists to provide information about them. The character of Elena of *Cinema Paradiso*,

whose brief appearance in the third act of the 1988 version is completely cut from the 1989 version, is similarly restricted to Salvatore's memories of her. Amalia in *L'amore molesto* is also absent from the film, but is represented by the memories of her daughter Delia rather than by a male character. In addition to demonstrating one character's inability to mourn the loss of another, these films' depiction of silent women acknowledges the obscurement of perspectives and stories both within the films themselves and within the Italian myth of WWII.

All four selected films utilize memory and flashback as a narrative tool to varying extent. The domination of the narrator's memories on each film's narrative calls attention to the narrator's selectivity and unreliability, especially in terms of the variety of exclusions and omissions that "haunt" each film. In films depicting southern Italy, this raises questions of subjectivity and history in crafting the regional memory of the South. Further, the gendered trend of these depictions implies male control over a singular narrative in the forming of collective myths. Thus the very means by which each film tells its story is implicated in the same patriarchal process of editing and omitting that contributed to the Italian Resistance myth after WWII.

Regional differences in wartime experience, and resultant divergence between popular memories and official narratives of WWII, are not unique to Italy. The editing of uncomfortable political pasts to facilitate national recovery is characteristic of much of postwar Europe. What is particular to Italy is the extent to which the segmentation of memories concerning WWII accompanied the construction of a democracy, the First Republic, in the wake of a Fascist regime. The myth of the victorious, anti-Fascist Resistance movement conditioned the pro-democracy ideals that would shape the Italian constitution (Pezzino, 2005). The mixed cultural map of Italy—both in terms of contemporary economic development and historical experiences

of wartime trauma—may be instructive to further studies of ED in the context of profound intracultural difference. Historical studies of ED rates in the American South after the Civil War, of Japan in the 1950s, or of South Africa after apartheid, for example, may pose compelling research possibilities. Contemporary studies of other European countries that suffered divisions during and after WWII could also provide interesting comparison to this thesis. This thesis's premises and even methodology can feasibly be extended to any setting in which a connection between historical collective trauma and contemporary individual pathologies merits investigation via cultural artifacts.

This thesis also has contributions to offer to fields outside of ED and trauma. For discourses around Italian history, for example, this research applies Morgan's (2007) unique historical account of WWII Italy to contemporary culture. In the vast study of Italian film, this thesis is intended to contribute close, alternative readings of acclaimed contemporary films. Further, this thesis leaves open possibilities to pursue similar regional case studies through selective film samples. The overarching goal of my inquiry, however, is to contribute to the growing interdisciplinary body of knowledge utilized in recognizing, diagnosing, and treating cases of ED. Interdisciplinary explanations for such a universal expression of crisis as ED must take into account both the cultural and biological aspects of disorders, just as treatment strategies for ED must take into account collective culture and history as well as individual biology and psychopathology. This study on the traces in contemporary film of historical trauma and of the ED pathologies it precipitates in southern Italy is just one example of the potential of cultural studies in illuminating the number of facets at work in ED etiologies and development.

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