Dana Renga

Oedipal Conflicts in Marco Tullio Giordana's *The Hundred Steps*[1]

> I joined the PSIUP with the anger and desperation of someone who wants to simultaneously break with everything and look for protection. Soon after, I fell madly in love with one of my young [male] comrades; I never expressed my desires, but I constructed a large part of my political life upon this schizoid condition, tumultuously.
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> (Peppino Impastato, *Lunga è la notte* 115-16, my translation)

> Ho un'infinita fame / D'amore, dell'amore di corpi senza anima. / Perché l'anima è in te, sei tu, ma tu / sei mia madre e il tuo amore è la mia schiavitù: / ho passato l'infanzia schiavo di questo senso / alto, irrimediabile, di un impegno immenso. / Era l'unico modo per sentire la vita / L'unica tinta, l'unica forma: ora è finita.
>
> (Pier Paolo Pasolini, "Supplica a mia madre," *Tutte le poesie* 1102)

I cento passi: *An Anti-Mafia Martyr Film?*

Marco Tullio Giordana's *I cento passi* (*The Hundred Steps*, 2000) is oft discussed as the anti-mafia martyr movie par excellence. The film, based on a true story, chronicles the life and death of passionate activist Giuseppe (Peppino) Impastato, born in Cinisi in 1948 into a family with ties to Cosa Nostra. His father Luigi was a small-business owner indebted to Cinisi *capomafia* Gaetano Badalamenti, and his uncle Cesare Manzella was a mafia boss murdered in a clan war in 1963. On May 9, 1978, Peppino was assassinated by Badalamenti's men, beaten to death and then blown up on the railroad tracks. Millicent Marcus explores the various functions of commemoration at play in both Tullio Giordana's film and Pasquale Scimeca's *Placido Rizzotto* from the same year. In particular, she points out the memorialist impulse at work in both films and concludes that each represents "cinematic tomb inscriptions" ("*In Memoriam*" 292) that memorialize two forgotten martyrs. And the same is said on a large scale in the majority of scholarship and reviews devoted to the film.[2] What's more, the film has been shown in schools and civic organizations

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[1] I would like to thank Dom Holdoway for sharing with me his research on *I cento passi*.

[2] Examples abound, for instance, Bondanella labels the two films as "biopics celebrating two Sicilians who fought against the mafia and paid with their lives" (480). Babini argues that both films "reviv[e] neorealism, endowing it with epic tones" and hark back to "the tradition of the political cinema of the 1970s [... to] bring to the fore two of the many unknown martyrs in the war against the mafia" (244-45). Small discusses how *I cento passi* "narrates a tale of exceptional courage" (44). De Stefano states that *I cento passi* is "a consciousness-raising tool for anti-Mafia forces, as well as a memorial to a fallen leader of the anti-mafia struggle" (320).

throughout Italy, and used as a pedagogical tool to raise consciousness with regard to the anti-mafia movement. As such, it could be argued that the biopic inaugurates a new millennium of awareness of and protest against the Mafia in Italy.

At first glance, this appears to be the case: The viewer embarks on a journey of discovery with the protagonist, and is meant to identify with Peppino from the outset, to feel his anger and frustration as the Mafia relentlessly exploits his native town, to share in his tenacity during his heroic, local and fruitless battle against the organization, to express shock and horror at his gruesome execution and finally to shed a collective tear during the popular protest that acted as his memorial. In many ways, Peppino embodies the active male protagonist so typical of Hollywood cinema that Laura Mulvey takes to task in her seminal article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." Throughout the film, Peppino "demands a three-dimensional space corresponding to that of the mirror recognition" (20) — and we will return to the mirror later. Frequently, Giordana weds Peppino's image with the earth, and he thus becomes "a figure of the landscape," while, as an activist, he "command[s] the stage" and "creates the action" over and over again (20). The employment of techniques such as deep focus, on location shooting, unobtrusive editing and a predominantly linear and uncomplicated narrative structure suture the viewer into the film while minimizing extra-diegetic intrusions so to achieve a realistic portrayal of events.[3] Indeed, the film concludes with a montage of photographs showing the historical Giuseppe Impastato who looks uncannily similar to the actor, Luigi Lo Cascio, who interpreted him. Thus, in the viewer's imagination, the actor has become the historical figure and representation is effaced by reality. Moreover, the appealing and popular musical score represents, as Emanuele D'Onofrio argues, "that particular period as a mirror for contemporary society" (162), and Catherine O'Rawe points out how "soundtrack forms part of the middlebrow address" of the film (214). Thus, on the surface, the anti-mafia message of *I cento passi* is overt and uncomplicated.

Upon closer examination of the gender dynamics at play in the film, however, such an unequivocal reading falls apart. To cite the most glaring example, the staging of Peppino's homosexuality is ambivalent and evasive in

[3] Here is the complete citation: "In contrast to woman as icon, the active male figure (the ego ideal of the identification process) demands a three-dimensional space corresponding to that of the mirror-recognition, in which the alienated subject internalised his own representation of his imaginary existence. He is a figure in a landscape. Here the function of film is to reproduce as accurately as possible the so-called natural conditions of human perception. Camera technology (as exemplified by deep focus in particular) and camera movements (determined by the action of the protagonist), combined with invisible editing (demanded by realism), all tend to blur the limits of screen space. The male protagonist is free to command the stage, a stage of spatial illusion in which he articulates the look and creates the action" (Mulvey 20).

the extreme. Alan O'Leary argues that the unitive ethos of *I cento passi* is helped in no small part by both the elimination of Peppino's homosexuality and the downplaying of his active militancy with the Democrazia Proletaria (Proletariat Democracy) (196-97). As such, Giordana allows Peppino's martyrdom at the expense of both his sexual and political identity. Read further, Peppino's violent murder puts an end to not only his anti-mafia protests, but also to the feminine and non-violent ethos that he represents. As Mary Wood argues, the defeat of a new model of masculinity, embodied by Peppino, "signals the difficulty of adopting a 'new man's' role" (173). Although she is discussing new male roles in Italian films from the last 20 years at large, I would add that Peppino's unconventional masculinity is even more at odds in a mafia milieu. In short, the overt reliance on conventional techniques and themes in the film only tells one side of the story and Peppino's death effaces his difference.

In the Name of Whose Father? Gender Identity in a Mafia Context

Borrowing from Herbert Marcuse's thesis regarding "repressive tolerance," Giovanni Dall'Orto argues that in Italy, homosexuality was repressed for so long that, until recently, it simply did not exist on the national level. The Mafia, however, has not evolved at all and remains a homosocial organization that demands normative behavior. Male bonding defines the group, which is designated by Renate Siebert as esoteric, through such rituals as hunting, communal banquets, initiation rites and blood brotherhoods that are all meant, ironically, to enforce bonds with mother earth.[4] Homosocial desire, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgewick tells us, designates "social bonds of persons of the same sex." (1) However, her use of the term presumes a "potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual," a continuum that the Mafia dictates remain unambiguous (1). "A man's first duty is to not be a woman," writes Siebert, and the goal of the Mafioso is to exorcise all feminine qualities from himself (*The Secrets of Life and Death* 79).[5] This form of homophobia, or the "hatred of feminine qualities in men," (24) defines male homosocial relations in a mafia context where masculinity is never a given, and must be constantly proven through generally violent measures.[6] Indeed, in the Mafia context, homophobia enforces heteronormativity. Hence, it is the very identification with the "abjection" of homosexuality, to borrow Judith Butler's terminology, that enables and produces heterosexuality. She poses the question:

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[4] See the chapter "A Men-Only Society" in *The Secrets of Life and Death*, in particular 22-27.

[5] Here, Siebert is quoting the work of French feminist Élisabeth Badinter from her *XY de l'identité masculine*.

[6] Bertone and Ferrero Camoletto interviewed seventy-one men and women about male pleasure. In interviews pertaining to male group masturbation, the authors note that the interviewees "avoid interpreting homosociality as having an erotic meaning, stressing instead its training function" (243).

"If heterosexual identification takes place *not* through the refusal to identify as homosexual but *through* an identification with an abject homosexuality that must, as it were, never show, then can we extrapolate that normative subject positions generally depend on and are articulated through a region of abjected identifications?" (112) The Mafia defines as abject all qualities that can be considered feminine — they must be disavowed or expelled in order for masculinity (the cult of death, of power) to remain intact. The fear of the abject is a fear of the feminine, or an anxiety about returning to the pre-symbolic stage before language and differentiation.

Ironically, however, as Siebert argues, the Mafia is a brotherhood born out of a common desire to both possess and defend the mother, who "symbolically represents possession of the earth." Thus, the maternal image binds the group together and is a weapon turned against "law, the state, the outside world, in defense of the world inside, in defense of a mother fantasized as uniquely good," ironically dubbed the "mammasantissima," the "most holy of mothers" (*The Secrets of Life and Death* 26). Mafiosi, Siebert tells us, have a deeply ambivalent relationship with the feminine which results from the cultural tendency to "double the figure of the female as a woman on the one hand and, on the other, as a mother who can in some way suitably placate men's fear of women" (60). Paradoxically, they are acutely attached to the maternal yet repudiate the feminine in order to exalt the "Mediterranean Mother," or "she who poisons her children's minds, she who underlies the mafia psychology and the presumed maternal culture of mafia society; the woman who transmits the culture of vendetta, the woman who educates her children to mafia 'values,' the wicked, revengeful woman who embodies the substratum of *Mafiosità*" ("Mafia and Anti-Mafia" 49).

In her discussion of the abject in horror cinema, Barbara Creed puts forth that "the mother is gradually rejected because she comes to represent, to signify, the period of the semiotic which the paternal symbolic constructs as 'abject'" (38). Unlike the properly socialized Mafioso, Peppino over-identifies with his mother and overtly repudiates his father. Indeed, he seems never to successfully overcome the "Mirror Stage" which, as Lacan explains,

> is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation — and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality [...] — and, lastly, the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject's entire mental development.
>
> (4)

The mirror constructs a previously fragmented self by projecting "the formation of the individual into history" (4) and linking "the I to socially elaborated situations" (5). Hence, the journey from semiotic to symbolic that takes place with the acquisition of language concludes with the subject's recognition and

acceptance of a symbolic father, the Lacanian "Name of the Father," who embodies the law, who takes on the superego and who prohibits incest. Kaja Silverman explains that "the signifier 'father' has no relation whatever to the physical fact of any individual father. Instead, that signifier finds its support in a network of other signifiers, including 'phallus,' 'law,' 'adequacy,' and 'mother'" (*The Subject of Semiotics* 164). Peppino is aware of these differences, but also recognizes that his father embodies the Law of Father, i.e., mafia law. He tells his younger brother Giovanni when walking the hundred steps that separated the Impastato house from that of Tano Badalamenti that their father is not "old-fashioned" but just "another Mafioso" like all of the inhabitants of Cinisi. Indeed, Peppino seamlessly equates his biological father with the superego: "[...] my father, my family, my country [...] I want to F*** it all." Furthermore, he emphatically tells Giovanni that they must rebel before they grow used to the corruption and become exactly like everyone else. Hence, as is hinted at early on in the film, Peppino does not partake in the false recognition of wholeness and mastery that comes with the successful dissolution of the Oedipus complex. Moreover, Oedipal configurations onscreen shed significant light onto how gender identities are constructed and maintained in the Mafia. In particular, the film highlights the primacy of parental authority (or lack thereof) in the inculcation of mafia values in children. In foregrounding the Oedipal narrative, Giordana lays bare the symbolic identity crisis that all inducted Mafiosi must undergo, a process that Peppino rejects. Indeed, Peppino's battle against the Mafia is really against his own father.

I cento passi is, borrowing from Teresa de Lauretis, "narrative and Oedipal with a vengeance" (157), but with a twist. Peppino predominantly conforms to the active "figure of narrative movement" (145) whose childhood questioning about the death of his uncle "generates a narrative, turns it into a quest" (112). He asks his mother the fateful question, "What does it feel like to die this way," (his uncle was blown to pieces by a car bomb in 1963) and her blunt yet revealing response, "You feel nothing, it's so brief," inaugurates Peppino's desire to know while portending his future death and martyrdom. Thus, narrative is based on a question of desire posed to the mother, the "mythical obstacle" (143). Conspicuous, however, is the absence of a female love interest in a film that works to support the active and masculine status of the "mythical subject" (113). Felicia stands in for this lack and demands a rereading of the Oedipus myth as it is played out in *I cento passi*. Ultimately, the collective gaze does not converge on a passive object of desire and this absence confounds traditional connections of visual and narrative pleasure.

Indeed, the primacy and complexity of the gaze is conspicuous in *I cento passi*. The film opens with the mirror reflection of a frustrated young Giovanni as he struggles with his bowtie while Peppino and Felicia are reflected in shallow focus as she brushes his hair in spite of her son's protests. From the outset of the film, it is implied that, unlike with Peppino, Giovanni's passing

through the mirror stage was uncomplicated: his reflection is unfragmented and he acts the deferential son who obeys his father Luigi and accepts his power position. For example, when Luigi enters the room, Giovanni immediately asks him for help, and his affect is cheerful and then obedient when Luigi reproaches Felicia for putting a bobby pin in his hair, which is a clear marker of femininity. Peppino, however, is much more reserved around his father, and seems to doubt his authority when Luigi grabs his chin and questions him on whether he memorized a poem and then warns him not to make a fool of the family. Throughout the film, Peppino's relationship with Luigi grows ever more contentious while Felicia remains protective of her son and somewhat encourages his difference, in particular his anti-mafia activity.

To some extent, *I cento passi* rewrites and sentimentalizes the father-son relationship, downplays Luigi's mafia involvement, and paints him, especially towards the end of his life, as a misunderstood and lonely father who will protect his son at all costs. He tells cousin Anthony during his visit to America that if "they" want to kill his son, they will have to kill him first, and moments before his death he nostalgically recalls verses of the Leopardi poem that Peppino recited as a child. The historical Luigi Impastato, however, was a Mafioso sent to *confino*, or internal exile, in Ustica for three years during fascism and later was a tyrant in the home. In an interview, Felicia Impastato explains that her husband had an open affair, her life with him "was hell" and his temper flared regularly (13-23). The recasting of a kinder Luigi in the film privileges the family drama and foregrounds the Oedipal scenario, which broadens the film's reach, especially in the Italian filmic tradition where Oedipal narratives have become a typical modus of understanding national history.[7] Of course, *I cento passi* is about the Mafia of Cinisi, but it is also about the anxieties and tribulations of a refractory young man who is at odds with local power systems.

Contrary to Peppino, who is a modern-day rebel with a cause, Giovanni is the dutiful son who implores his brother to stop making trouble and attempts to keep the peace in the family. Most apposite, Giovanni finds a suitable partner named Felicia whose name, Peppino points out just after meeting her, is "just like mom's." For Peppino, Giovanni's path is all too easy, as he clarifies for his friend Salvo while they are photographing the Cinisi airport from a nearby hillside. In a discourse evocative of Giacomo Leopardi's poem "L'infinito" that young Peppino reads at a family gathering at the beginning of the film, Peppino

[7] Films made in the late 1960s and 1970s that treat Italian Fascism, World War II and the Partisan Resistance, for example, frequently infuse the historical narrative with an Oedipal twist. In films such as Luchino Visconti's *La caduta degli dei* (1969), Bernardo Bertolucci's *La strategia del ragno* (1970), *Il conformista* (1970) and *Novecento* (1976), Liliana Cavani's *Il portiere della notte* (1974) and Lina Wertmüller's *Pasqualino settebellezze* (1975), male protagonists confront the past head on in an attempt to liberate themselves from the hold of real and metaphorical fathers.

questions whether beauty should be privileged over political activism. But, as Laura Wittman argues, the "political experience of beauty is anything that is objective," and such gestures (exchanging the ideology of politics for that of the pursuit of beauty) do not come easily for Peppino (4). Giovanni, Peppino points out, chose the conventional path, one to be filled with simple houses, accompanying television sets and window boxes full of geraniums. Peppino underlines that he envies his brother's normality, yet he could never live that sort of normative lifestyle. Thus, his reification of heteronormativity accentuates his difference. Indeed, while Giovanni chooses a suitable partner who is "like" his mother, Peppino is incapable of making any such life choice at all. Instead, he remains, referencing Pier Paolo Pasolini's poem "Supplica a mia madre," a slave to his mother's love. To be sure, Luigi reminds Felicia that since divorce is now legal in Italy, she can leave him to marry her son, her "fiancé."

For several reasons, Peppino is not a normal man in the mafia milieu which is governed by the code of *omertà*, whose etymology, according to Giuseppe Pitrè, "non significa umiltà [...] ma omineità, qualità di essere omu, cioè serio, sodo, forte" (294). To follow *omertà* means to act like a man, and sublimate and repress any effeminate qualities to enter into, in Renate Siebert's words, an *über* hetero-normative and homophobic "men only society," which is the title of one of the chapters of *Secrets of Life and Death*. What's more, mob thinking, in particular the thirst for revenge, *de rigueur* subservience of women and hyperbolic emphasis on personal honor, finds its roots in the traditional family unit, whose structure is the blueprint for the mafia hierarchy. And, according to Anton Blok, the agnatic or affinal "family" that one is born or marries into must always be subordinated to the ritualized "Family" into which the Mafioso enters through a symbolic ritual. In consequence, or perhaps as a result, "family" loyalties only go so far, as they are by demand subsumed to the larger interests of "Family."[8]

Oedipal Conflicts

Generational and kinship struggles are foregrounded in *I cento passi*, foremost in the mirrored "umbilical scenes" that take place roughly half-way through the film and make conspicuous Peppino's seditious relations with his father and inextricable bond to his mother. Millicent Marcus employs the term "umbilical" to designate moments when "the film reveals the traces of its derivation from the parent text and discloses its interpretive strategy" (*Filmmaking By the Book* 140). Indeed, these scenes, read in light of Pasolini's poem "Supplica a mia madre," lay bare both Peppino's umbilical attachment to the maternal and the visceral sense of loss associated with the realization of the fragmented oedipal self.

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[8] See Blok's discussion of kinship "family" and mafia "Family" in "Mafia and Blood Symbolism."

Tired of the constant roadblocks created by local authorities in their attempt to stage anti-mafia rallies, Peppino and his comrades establish "Radio Aut," a self-financed radio station used to denounce the rampant corruption and mafia activity of "Mafiopoli" (Cinisi). When Peppino's broadcasts air Tano's dirty laundry (his involvement in the drug and prostitution trade and his misappropriation of government funds meant to stimulate economic development in Southern Italy), Tano calls upon Luigi to silence his son. In a final attempt to curb Peppino's public and vocal anti-mafia activities, Luigi interrupts Peppino while he is reciting the "windmill scene" from Miguel de Cervantes's Don Quixote, and beats his son to the ground. He dominates him and pleads with him to respect both church and family by remembering the commandment that he was taught as a young boy in church. Luigi implores Peppino to "honor thy father," a phrase that he repeats seven times, as he gently clutches and caresses his son's head. The camera is positioned on the floor and captures the pair in close-up and the scene is framed to approximate a violent sexual attack, particularly as Luigi's violence is tinged with excessive intimacy. Peppino, however, refuses to sit by and to allow cycles of mafia violence to continue and he rebels against the metaphorical rape. Thus, his attempted parricide makes clear his refusal to "honor his father" as signifier of law and bearer of the phallus.

Luigi's plea to his son entangles the sacred with the profane and underscores connections between religion, power, violence and honor in a mafia context. John Dickie explains:

> Like mafia honour, mafia religion helps mafiosi justify their actions [...]. Mafiosi often like to think that they are killing in the name of something higher than money and power, and the two names they usually come up with are "honour" and "God." Indeed, the religion professed by mafiosi and their families is like so much else in the moral universe of mafia honour, in that it is difficult to tell where genuine — if misguided — belief ends, and cynical deceit begins.
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> (33)

Hence, it can be argued that Luigi's violent outburst helps, according to Blok, "to obtain satisfaction for stained honour and to restore [the] reputation for manliness" (*Honour and Violence* 105). But Luigi's authoritarianism is colored by compassion, which aids in the taming function of patriarchal authority in the Impastato household and spotlights the Oedipal narrative.

After standing up to his father, Peppino is exiled from the home and retreats to a marginal space where he engages in a deeply eroticized encounter with his mother. Felicia directly opposes her husband's authority to visit Peppino in the garage-cum-bedroom that he now calls home to bring his books. She walks in on him when he is sleeping, and he immediately asks after the work of Pier Paolo Pasolini and begins reading the politically engaged poem "Le ceneri di Gramsci" in the "voce grossa" that he adopts when attacking the Mafia. When

Felicia protests, he chooses to read another poem, "Supplica a mia madre," in a softer and more intimate tone. The poem's subject matter together with Peppino's gaunt and nearly naked body, deep intra-diegetic gazes and the pair reflected in the mirror reinforce the scene's erotic and voyeuristic nature. Indeed, notes in the screenplay indicate that "there is something strange about this scene: the young half naked boy and the woman in the darkness of a garage turned into an alcove. It seems more like a clandestine encounter between two lovers than that of a mother bringing supplies to her son" (79).

References to Pasolini's film *Oedipus Rex* (1967, based in part, as Pasolini has said, on his own life) abound here and throughout the film, in particular in how both films comment on the abuses of power. Allusions to Pasolini in *I cento passi* remind us that, similar to the character of Matteo in Giordana's *La meglio gioventù* (2003), Peppino's violent struggle against the Mafia is also one against his own father. "Le ceneri di Gramsci," Pasolini's best known political poem, is literally pushed aside in favor of an encounter with highly Oedipal overtones. The camera slowly zooms in on Peppino as he recites the first two couplets of the poem: "È difficile dire con parole di figlio / ciò a cui nel cuore ben poco assomiglio. / Tu sei la sola al mondo che sa, del mio cuore, / ciò che è stato sempre, prima d'ogni altro amore," (1-4) and then captures Felicia's rapt and attentive gaze as he concludes on the primacy of the mother's love. Peppino then coaxes her into reading the subsequent eight verses:

> Per questo devo dirti ciò ch'è orrendo conoscere:
> è dentro la tua grazia che nasce la mia angoscia.
> Sei insostituibile. Per questo è dannata
> alla solitudine la vita che mi hai data.
> E non voglio esser solo. Ho un'infinita fame
> d'amore, dell'amore di corpi senza anima.
> Perché l'anima è in te, sei tu, ma tu
> sei mia madre e il tuo amore è la mia schiavitù....
>
> (5-12)

As she recites in medium shot, Peppino is shown reflected in the mirror in shallow focus, looking downward, his gaze without address. Their eyes do not meet and he is immobile, and it is suggested that he remains trapped in the mirror phase, which, as an adult, condemns him to a solitary and anguished existence. When Felicia looks up from the poem, the camera briefly catches Peppino in medium shot as he closes his eyes seemingly out of despair and then switches back to a two shot of the pair with Felicia in the foreground. As she continues reading, the camera slowly zooms in to a close-up of Peppino's downcast gaze, which reveals the pain of his otherness before cutting back to a medium close-up of Felicia shot from behind as she concludes her reading. After pronouncing the verse "your love is my slavery," she turns back to gaze fixedly at Peppino, and the screen fades to black.

This sequence, which is composed predominantly of a series of shot/reverse shots, confounds rather than solidifies the gaze in its reluctance to suture the viewer into the narrative framework. In classical cinema, the shot/reverse shot formation consolidates meaning and effaces narrative intrusions. Here, however, Giordana foregrounds lack and absence, and purposefully disorients the viewer by avoiding eyeline matches, violating the 180-degree rule and ending the scene without the expected reverse shot (the viewer is left literally in the dark at the scene's close). In her discussion of suture in narrative film ("On Suture"), Kaja Silverman maintains that when the viewing subject becomes aware of the limitations of vision, feelings of imaginary plentitude sacrificed after passing out of the mirror stage give way to unpleasure. Jouissance or pleasure disappears with the recognition of an absent field occupied by the "Absent One," who is the speaking subject of the cinematic text, and who controls the gaze of the viewing subject and "has all the attributes of the mythically potent symbolic father: potency, knowledge, transcendental vision, self sufficiency and discursive power" (140). The speaking subject, however, must remain hidden so that viewing pleasure remains intact. The garage scene reveals the passivity of the viewing subject and discloses "the reality outside of that fiction," which is, precisely, Peppino's lack of mastery and wholeness in the face of the "coercive and castrating other" (140) that is the Mafia. This scene in *I cento passi* "ruptures the Oedipal formation which provides the basis of the present symbolic order" through flagrantly foregrounding "the voyeuristic dimensions of the cinematic experience" (141) and making manifest the absent field of vision. Peppino is prisoner to his mother's love. Yet his enslavement, it is indicated, precludes him from entering another structure, the "most holy of mothers."

Innocenzo Fiore writes that "la donna è il potere mentre il maschio ha (dalla donna) il potere" (54). He means that women are the custodians of family honor (the key tenet of *mafiosità*) and that masculine authority is a direct consequence of whether women honor or dishonor the men in their lives. Felicia Impastato stands in direct opposition to the traditional mafia mother in that she does not partake in any of the "active" functions generally demanded of women in the organization.[9] As discussed earlier, after her husband banishes Peppino from the house, she blatantly dismisses his power position by bringing her son books and supplies and then, when Luigi is away in America, she welcomes Peppino back home. More to the point, she refuses to instill cultural mafia codes in her children, and outright demands that her son's death not be avenged (after

[9] For a discussion of the maternal role in mafia families, see Ingrasci, especially 1-45, and the chapters "A Men-Only Society," "The Family" and "Women" in Siebert, *The Secrets of Life and Death*. See also Lo Verso, who writes that the transmission "di valori, della cultura, dei modelli relazionali, simbolici ed affettivi viene fatto, in larga parte, dalle madri" (31).

Peppino's murder she tells cousin Anthony that her son is not "one of you," and she does not want a vendetta carried out on the family's behalf). As Ombretta Ingrasci tells us, "nella divisione di genere, la donna si occupa della cosiddetta 'pedagogia della vendetta.' Trasmette questa practica incitando gli uomini, in particolare i figli, a riparare il torto subito, spingendoli a operare nel giorno dell'anniversario della perdita dell'onore" (23). Hence, Felicia subverts the concept of honor that is key to mafia culture.[10]

I cento passi suggests that the motivations behind Peppino's crusade against both his real father Luigi and his metaphorical father Tano stem not from resistance ideology but from a dependence upon his mother's love. The lack of a coherent anti-mafia message is further thematized in the structure of "Supplica," which is, like Peppino's identity, divided. Curiously, the concluding, yet unpronounced, couplets of the poem resonate with a sense of political engagement:

> ho passato l'infanzia schiavo di questo senso
> alto, irrimediabile, di un impegno immenso.
> Era l'unico modo per sentire la vita.
> L'unica tinta, l'unica forma: ora è finita.
> Sopravviviamo: ed è la confusione
> di una vita rinata fuori dalla ragione.
> Ti supplico, ah, ti supplico: non voler morire.
> Sono qui, solo, con te, in un futuro aprile... (13-20)
>
> (1102)

Peppino's own death and subsequent martyrdom are foreshadowed here (in that the poet states that he does not want to die, that his life is over, and so on). Pasolini's reference to a "futuro aprile" recalls the failed resistance movement. The concluding lines of the poem are laden with a sense of defeat; now that the struggle is over, life has no meaning, and survival takes precedence over "impegno" or political commitment. The regressive, maternal and semiotic state common to the verses 1-12 is countered with a concluding voice that is historically aware and retrospective. Hence, the poem expresses a schizophrenic condition that is akin to the actual Peppino Impastato's musing on his own political and sexual identities. In a diary entry from 1965, Peppino writes: "I joined the PSIUP with the anger and desperation of someone who wants to simultaneously break with everything and look for protection. Soon after, I fell madly in love with one of my young [male] comrades; I never expressed my

[10] After her son's death, together with her surviving son Giovanni, Felicia Bartolotta Impastato publicly broke off all relations with her relatives involved in the Mafia. For more on her anti-mafia activity, see Felice Bartolotta Impastato, *La mafia in casa mia*, and the chapter on her in dalla Chiesa 39-60.

desires, but I constructed a large part of my political life upon ~~my~~ schizoid condition, tumultuously" (116).[11]

The Reconstituted Mirror

Is, then, the film suggesting that Peppino's political anti-mafia involvement is the result of his repressed homosexuality? More likely, the *mise-en-abîme* is meant to evoke the era to which Pasolini's most well known work can be dated, a period fraught with political and social unrest and economic uncertainty, i.e., Pasolini becomes shorthand for a politically engaged moment in Italian history.[12] At the same time, the film constructs affinities between the two in life (particularly the mother-son relationship) and in death. The protagonist's identification with Pasolini suggests the possibility of a gay Peppino, as does the construction of Peppino's queerness out of difference from his brother's heterosexism, the inclusion of a male friend with whom Peppino seems to share an intimate bond, and allusions to an Oedipal relationship between mother and son, although, as de Stefano points out, homosexuality as an "'unsuccessful' resolution of the Oedipal conflict [is a] discredited Freudian clich[é]" (325). Nevertheless, these all could be categorized as red herrings, *mise-en-abîmes* to highlight Peppino's individualism, intellect and rebellion. Ultimately, however, the privileging of the hegemonic masculine martyr narrative subordinates difference and as a result homosexuality is equated with psychopathology and difference. Indeed, the metaphor of illness as difference perpetuated in the film mirrors real-life Peppino's musings on his condition (not to mention Pasolini's own writings regarding his homosexuality).

Although many (such as his brother Giovanni) have debated and even denied outright that Peppino Impastato was homosexual, his sexual preference is no longer in question.[13] Peppino himself admits as much in the diary entry cited above. In subsequent entries, we learn that the relationship lasted for two years and in 1968 he became involved with another young "compagno." This period, Peppino explains, was the most "heartrending" and "exciting" of his personal and political life. He oscillated between experiencing "bare desperation" to "moments of authentic exaltation and creative ability" (118).[14] As Paparcone

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[11] My translation. Note that Peppino crossed out the possessive in the sentence "non espressi mai i miei desideri, ma su questa ~~mia~~ condizione schizoide ho costruito larga parte della mia dimensione politica, tumultuosamente." The PSIUP stands for the Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity.

[12] For a discussion of references to Pasolini in more recent Italian cinema see Renga.

[13] See the many pages of Impastato's diary, especially 115-29. See also a dissertation by Paparcone that includes an interview with Umberto Santino who confirms Peppino's homosexuality.

[14] The full citation reads: "I _____ once again with one of my young comrades. This was possibly the most heartrending and exalting period of my existence and political life. I continually oscillated between phases of bare desperation to moments of authentic

notes, the diary, however, was only published in its entirety in 2006 after having been made public in 2003 (109), which begs the question as to whether Giordana was aware of Peppino's homosexuality before making *I cento passi*. Pioneering research by Dominic Holdaway tells us, however, that Giordana was privy to this information through his contact with and interest in a screenplay from 1998 that was never made: Antonio Carella's *Nel cuore della luna* treats Peppino's life and the aftermath of his death and includes a scene in which the protagonist's coming out to his close friend Enrico ends with the two men kissing.[15] In this scene, Peppino admits to having had a homosexual encounter while showering with a friend at the seaside. When his friend begins to soap his back, he remembers his mother bathing him as a child: "I remembered my mother when she bathed me [...] and she caressed me with her delicate hands [...] all over my body [...] that boy [...] he smiled at me" (113). Of particular interest here is the collusion of this memory: the earlier recollection of his mother seamlessly transitions to the description of his friend. Peppino then cries out for help, exclaiming that he is "sick" — "aiutami! Io sto male!," which precipitates the erotic encounter between the two friends in the present day.

No such episode takes place in Giordana's film, nor could it. Ultimately, for Peppino's status as martyr to stay intact, his identificatory projection must remain normative and unthreatening. As de Lauretis argues, the classical narrative comes to a close when the modern day Oedipus finds the heroine waiting for him (153), when "narrative, meaning and pleasure" converge to "support the male status of the mythical subject" (140). And such is the case with *I cento passi*. The anti-mafia protest to which Felicia contributes her son's casket concludes the film and inaugurates Peppino's martyr status, which irrevocably answers the question, "what does it feel like to die this way." Indeed, as Marcus argues, "the victim's mother endows Giordana's entire film with the double function of epitaph and call to arms" ("*In Memoriam*" 292). Individual suffering is transformed into political and social action that has the potential, it is suggested, to actively combat the Mafia. Yet the unitive tenor inherent in the film's conclusion is ironically realized through the disunion of Peppino's body, which was completely destroyed. The casket, however, stands in to reconstitute Peppino's fractured self, both his literal remains, which are

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exaltation and creative ability." Interestingly, Peppino cannot bring himself to put his feelings in writing and omits the expression "fall in love," leaving instead a blank space (118).

[15] Holdaway shared this information and pages from the screenplay with me. I am forever in his debt. He is currently working on a project that looks at how cinema as industry tempers the level of political engagement in *I cento passi*. He interviewed Carella who confirmed Peppino's homosexuality and described the reasons for which the screenplay was never produced (essentially, although he had support from Giovanni Impastato, RAI and others, the appearance of the already funded script by Claudia Fava and Monica Zapelli put an end to the project.

scattered throughout the countryside, and his previously unconstituted ego. Indeed, the whole town, including the police chief, participates in the wake which puts forward a social fantasy of justice that appears uncomplicated. Cinisi represented in *I cento passi* mirrors, in di Pelo's words, all of Sicily, and Peppino's reconstituted identity is part of that reflection. As such, his difference is sacrificed at the expense of solidifying viewer identification, assuring narrative closure and reinstilling jouissance in the realm of the Law. Ultimately, Giordana's film suggests the impossibility of desiring differently in a mafia context, both on and offscreen, and Peppino's death resolves his noncomformity.

The Ohio State University

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