

# CINECENSURA

BEYOND THE LIMITS OF REALITY.

ITALIAN CENSORSHIP AND THE FILM DOCUMENTARY

by Marco Bertozzi

The practice of censorship helps to disarm the eyes, distancing us from the feeling of familiarity of the images documented. Via censorship, we modify the parameters of admissibility, re-examining cultural restrictions between fact and fiction. A titanic mediation between what is visible and what is acceptable: conclusive proof being the term “documentary” which, in the last few years, has undergone vital theoretical reassessment, in an attempt to extract its very essence from an immaculate (notional) perception of the world. This is immediately apparent: *La folla e il fiume* (authorisation n. 920) poses the problems of the revision of works created during the era of Fascism. Sandro Pallavicini was behind the INCOM request “begging that the relative clearance be granted for screening. Respectfully. Rome, 15 July, 1946”. The film, a 1942 production, was given the green light the following day “on the condition that the sequences be cut regarding the anti-tuberculosis campaign, the “avant-gardists”, the “piccole italiane” (the Fascist association of girls aged 8 to 14) and any frames containing the Nazi svastika and the word “autarchy” appearing with fasces or eagles”. This transforms the eligibility of the truth: the destiny of the images clashes with the tragic destiny of man. Documentary cinema pulsates, intercepts, bears witness to and merges with the truth of mutating political-philosophical paradigms. The case of *Matera* is symptomatic (authorisation n. 9132, then 10128); it was a report by Sandro De Feo directed by Romolo Marcellini in 1951. The subject of the film speaks loud and clear: “Matera, the old city carved out of the rocks where life remains in a semi-primitive state, and, in contrast, the new buildings on the hills which are part of the urban renewal project for degraded areas”. The commission grants it authorisation in Italy, but, considering the request of 14 December, 1950, to export it to England, insists that “the scenes are eliminated in which working farm animals are seen to be living in homes, as this could give rise to a wrongful and damaging view of our Nation – art. IV of regulation R.D. 24 September 1923, n. 3287” (17 January 1951). The cave dwellings are a scandalous problem, “troglodyte abodes” on the margins of history, an embarrassment to an Italy on the fast-track towards development. Documento Film, executive producer for the Marshall Plan, appealed on 7 February 1951. A few days earlier, the Plan’s Information Division wrote a letter to Nicola De Pirro, the director general of Entertainment at the Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri (Council of Ministers), in which he underlined the fundamental visual importance of the scenes that the censors wished to have eliminated. For the US producers, the dialectics between the Italy of the past and the Italy of the future required that presence of the scenes frowned upon by the censors: “I would like to point out that the whole documentary has its foundations on this contrast,” wrote Frank Gervasi, Chief Information Division. On 20 June 1951, the commission agreed to vote “in favour of (the film) being projected in public”. If films backed by the ERP (European Recovery Program) assign to our nation the role of leading player in Europe for propaganda, an American viewer is more at liberty to observe the poverty of entire social classes and swaths of the country. It is these very same standards of life in the countryside which cause the governing classes such hypocritical shame. There was a request to cut some sequences from the film *Gente di Venafro* (authorisation n. 5496) by Marcellini, the same director, shot in Molise for the Marshall Plan, in that they were held to be damaging for the local landowning nobility: an inability to see/a lack of desire to put on show which was typical of the Italian ruling classes, in an alarming delay of the process of modernization

underway at the time. The request was clear cut: authorisation would be given “on the condition that the scene be cut in which a woman is seen throwing the contents of the night’s bed pan out the window, and that the spoken comments be modified about the palace’s masters and the seminarians taking a stroll”. Several months later, following the requested cuts, the revision commission expressed a “favourable opinion on exportation,” noting, however, that the title of the documentary had been altered from *Gente di Venafro* (The Folks of Venafro) to the more reassuring *Vecchio Paese* (Old Country) (Rome, 7 September 1950).

In order to circumvent the censors, the majority of documentaries produced attempted to stick to neutral subjects: stereotypical iconography, hackneyed clichés, hardly ever in contrast with governing policies or the “hand of God” of state financing. But this wasn’t always enough: an apparently innocuous film like 1955’s *Voci di Napoli* (Voices from Naples), directed by Damiano Damiani, caused an uproar. It was proof positive of how the vision of realism was the object of ferocious bartering. The film was given authorisation for national distribution but, as was the case with *Matera*, not for abroad, as “the scenes of the film solely lingered upon tawdry folkish elements that could give a wrongful and damaging impression of the city of Naples to those abroad”. But that was not enough for Achille Lauro, the mayor of Naples since 1952: he tried to have the film banned in Italy, too, waging an aggressive war against a film he held to be offensive and denigrating. Lauro claimed that Naples “has become one of the most welcoming and civilized centres of tourism in the world”. And the city “certainly doesn’t have the voices that are heard in such a documentary, but has the harmonious and melodic voices of its songs celebrated the world over, which today blend in with the industrious rhythm of its activities [...]. And instead of spreading the word about the imposing force of this city which rises from the ruins of war thanks to the determination and spirit of sacrifice of its inhabitants, they rifle through the garbage and debris to extract an authentic scandal that is both false and illusory, one which not only offends Naples but also those brings shame on those who generate it.” So, despite approval from the censors, the prefect of Naples presumed the right to withdraw the film from theatres. Certain senators – Palermo, Valenzi and Cerabona – protested animatedly, asking the Council of Ministers why the prefect was wasting his time withdrawing the film instead of defending it from being slurred by the local administration. Slurs which were confirmed by the film’s production company – Este Film – which wrote to Nicola De Pirro citing intimidation endured from parties including the press belonging to the very same Lauro (especially in *Roma*). The production company defended the film, illustrating the wealth of historical sources consulted throughout the production which “in twenty years, when the hawkers no longer exist and old Naples has disappeared [...] it will provide historical and cultural point of reference.” An intricate succession of events which calls to mind the moral lynching suffered by Anna Maria Ortese, hounded out of the city for //

*mare non bagna Napoli* (Naples Isn’t Washed by the Sea, 1953), not considered to be folksy enough and an attack on Naples itself.<sup>2</sup>

Works that fight against perceived canons, structurally established settings (having a certain “sense of reality”), invaded by disturbing images which rock the superficial and iconographic framework, distancing it from its everyday reality. These were the years in which Carlo Lizzani recalled that “the strangest post-war phenomenon in Italian cinema is the scarce involvement of documentary film in the general rebirth of our film industry, in the battles, the controversy that feature film directors have been able to generate and endorse both in Italy and abroad.”<sup>3</sup> Thanks to the multiple roles occupied within that particular climate, Lizzani became one of the most acute observers of the lack of recognition of the documentary. In a 1951 article in *Filmcritica* he spoke of the speculation unleashed by state funding, but he remained firmly opposed to the idea that the only way to eradicate this scandal would be to eliminate such subsidies. Lizzani’s battle-horse was to be found in

another area: the commissions hostile to courageous documentary-making, in the coalitions of major producers to manage the business of state funding.

The same factors listed in the book *Libro bianco sul cortometraggio italiano*, by documentary-makers of the ANAC (Associazione Nazionale Autori Cinematografici) in 1966, in which they underline “the forms of speculation which have allowed a small group of monopolists to earn enormous profits [as well as] the disturbing business that state funding for short films has represented for twenty years”<sup>4</sup>. Where attempts at non-conformist cinema can begin to form, the axe of the state falls hard and, along with the mesh of the censors, obscures even the frail attempts to produce “open-minded” documentary films. Lizzani was well aware of this, he had first-person experience of the censors with his documentaries on Modena and the South of Italy: “Sacrilégio – the documentary about the South of Italy showed farmers occupying the land.”<sup>6</sup>

Cinema had an almighty impact and realistic images were fundamental, something that the dictatorship was conscious of. Italy was by then a democracy, but the difficulties of allowing an insight into the realities of the country, barely accepted in Neorealism fiction feature films, was seen to be even more resounding. Even the Modena-based films, produced by Libertas Film, close to the Italian Communist Party, underwent cuts and bureaucratic hitches. In file no. 7728, a letter from a civil servant of the ministerial Council (signed by De Tomasi) addressed to SE Beniamino Leoni, head of the Legislative Office of the Council, contained the following words: “Sirs, the minutes of the appeal commission on the following films – *I comuni del popolo, I fatti di Modena, Nel Mezzogiorno qualcosa è cambiato, La nuova terra* – sent to be signed, were no longer returned to the revision office. Therefore, as it is my duty to ratify the case, I am enclosing a second copy of the aforementioned minutes, urging you to sign them. As soon as they are back in my possession, I will undertake to send them to the prefect Dr. Bilancia.” (Rome, 17 November 1951). Putting aside the bureaucratic language, it is clear that delaying tactics are at play with regards to thorny issues. In a letter sent to Andreotti on 30 October 1950, the Christian Democrat (DC) member of parliament, Attilio Bartole, formerly the president of the Modena FUCI (Federazione Universitaria Cattolica Italiana), expressed his dismay: “Dear Giulio, we are surprised to see, in the film theatres of Modena, a documentary illustrating the activities of this Social-Communist administration from 1946 onwards, made with obvious propagandistic aims.” Bartole was referring to *Modena, una città dell'Emilia Rossa* (1950): of course, it is a work of propaganda, but not a far cry from those produced by the Council of Ministers, or from the system of the pro-government values promoted by the loyalist newsreel, *Settimana Incom*, under the directorship of Sandro Pallavicini. Even *I fatti di Modena*, made following the massacre of six factory workers of the Fabbrica Orsi – the police fired at them during a protest – got the go-ahead under the conditions that “projection was limited: from the part that begins with the coffins being taken out of the hospital [until] the end of Togliatti’s speech,” thereby eliminating the vital reconstruction that Lizzani had put together via the testimonies of labourers and the citizens of Modena. Apart from the numerous cuts made for screening in Italy, the second-level film revision commission did not give authorisation for certain films abroad: and if the “national” cuts were usually claimed to be necessary so as not to “disturb public order”, the ban on screening abroad was once again motivated as damaging to the image of Italy (the notorious art. IV of R.D. 24 September 1923, n. 3287).

An image to be safeguarded, in a country that had been devastated by the war and that was now on the path of the so-called “economic miracle”.

And it is the battle over documentary film – where simplification and aesthetic misunderstandings are rife – which reveals the trite thinking behind certain censorial practices. It is interesting to note how some seemingly “neutral” documentaries, like educational industrial or scientific films (I should underline the case of *Merry Go Round*, produced by the BBC and rejected due to “the repeated view of male and female genitalia”) also came

under the censor's axe. Industrial documentaries reached a peak in the 1950s, due to the needs of major companies Fiat, Ilva, Edisonvolta, Montecatini, Prealpina and Farmaitalia.

From 1957 – with the industrial and crafts festival of Monza – there was a plethora of conventions and exhibitions dedicated to technical films. Even ANICA (Associazione Nazionale Industrie Cinematografiche Affini) volunteered to “give its own contribution to the creation of suitable circuits for the distribution of industrial films both in Italy and abroad.”<sup>7</sup> It was in this climate that *L'Italia non è un paese povero* (1960), saw the light of day: a film made under the express desire of the ENI (the state energy provider) chairman, Enrico Mattei, it was a typical by-product of the cultural reassessment underway in the country, as well as of the public censorship process, both by RAI and the ministerial commissions for cinema. The documentary's aim was to celebrate the successes of ENI, without falling into the propaganda trap, in order to dissipate the myth of a backwards Italy, inhabited solely by shepherds and ruins. A new image of the country, enriched by the benefits of research into oil and gas. Mattei had on his staff intellectuals who suggested he use a master of documentary cinema, Joris Ivens. The made-for-TV film was conceived in three parts, using techniques that were innovatory in Italy in those years, like the use of a hand-held camera and film speed variation. Alberto Moravia worked on it, as did Corrado Sofia (writing the comment, narrated by Enrico Maria Salerno) and a very young Tinto Brass, assistant director, Valentino Orsini and Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, who worked on the script. The documentary illustrates the distribution of methane gas in the Po valley, the story of two trees (an ancient olive tree and a technological “Christmas tree”, the equipment that regulates the entrance into the oil wells), the marriage of a Sicilian girl to a boy from the north of Italy who worked on an off-shore oil rig. Amongst other scenes, Ivens, a poet of militant filmmaking since *Borinage (Misère au Borinage, 1933, with Henri Storck)*, shot in the Matera *Sassi*, where children could be seen with flies on their eyes, in a cave dwelling that seemed more suitable for animals. Powerful images, that stretched the limits of what could be seen on public broadcasting television and which could suffocate the myth of an Italy on the fast-track to development, but sumptuously dressed up as a tale of rites and images of marginal popular culture. RAI refused to screen the film uncut. It was deemed too crude, and the protests of Ivens and his appeals to Mattei were all in vain. Mattei, in the meantime, in a nod to political opportunism, abandoned the film to its destiny. After a series of negotiations, the documentary was broadcast in three parts, presented as *Frammenti di un film di Joris Ivens*: it was by then in shreds, with about half an hour cut from the original edit (which was luckily saved by Brass, who managed to smuggle a copy of the original version into France). While internal censorship was carried out within RAI itself, external censorship was carried out by the IV film revision commission, whose approval was based on the condition that the scenes be cut “showing miserable hovels and excessive poverty with the usual forms of hygiene present, as it could lead to a wrongful and damaging impression of our country.” (1 August 1960). Further cuts were then required of the film, but three months after the commission's recommendations, a letter from the producer Federigo Valli confirmed the (deliberate?) slowness of giving it the green light.

“We do not need this authorisation for broadcast on Italian TV, which has already taken place,” pointed out the producer, “but in order to obtain the permit for temporary exportation so as to present it to foreign television networks with whom we are in talks to sell the rights. Certain cuts were recommended that we immediately carried out. But despite this, we have not yet received authorisation. This delay causes notable damages as we already have irrevocable commitments.” Several months pass, and on 7 February 1961, the production assures the commission that the copy that will be distributed abroad, under the title *Italy Strikes it Rich*, will be exactly the same as the edited version put under examination. An odyssey for a symbolic film, in a country looking eagerly to the future but having problems allowing indiscreet eyes to gaze upon its multi-

layered culture. And this time, in contrast to *Matera*, no Marshall Plan was in act to defend the film. Processing the fruits of a confused country, in prey to spurts of modernism and, at the same time, of widespread conservatism is the tough task of the censors in the 1960s. If the artistry of images in documentary cinema seems oriented towards (pseudo) realist immanentism, the censors have a tough task ahead of them in evaluating the representation of new gender roles and unusual "modes of pleasure".

While dreams are reshaped partly thanks to the acquisition of material and immaterial products, able to trigger off new levels of social life (cocktails and record players, scooters and mobile bars, films and nightclubs, finally within reach to most pockets during the boom years), time freed up involves dancing, music and, especially, cinema, in new expressive forms. The same mass invasion of *tiki culture* or *strip music* which invaded the USA in the 1950s, was seen in Italy with *cocktail vocalists* like Fred Buscaglione, before being magnified by the model of *La dolce vita* (1960) by Federico Fellini and spread to nightclubs throughout the country to the samba, mambo, calypso and cha-cha-cha rhythm. The censorial travails of *La dolce vita* are symptomatic of these changes: and, despite being on a different expressive plane, contribute to liberating the visual culture of a still bigoted and institutionally repressed society.

Films like *America di notte* (*America By Night*, 1961) by Giuseppe Maria Scotese, *Io amo, tu ami...* (*I Love, You Love*, 1961) by Alessandro Blasetti, *Gli italiani si divertono così* (*Wild, Weird, Wonderful Italians*, 1962) by Gianni Vernuccio, *I piaceri del mondo* (1963) by Vinicio Marinucci, *Nudi per vivere* (1963) by Elio Petri, Giuliano Montaldo and Giulio Questi, *Sexy proibito* (1963) by Osvaldo Civirani, *Sexy proibitissimo* (1963) by Marcello Martinelli, *Le schiave esistono ancora* (*Slave Trade in the World Today*, 1964) by Roberto Malenotti, *La femme spectacle* (*Night Women*, 1965) by Claude Lelouch suffered the censors moralising blows. Some of them were radical: no authorisation to *La donna è uno spettacolo*, where "the vulgarity of numerous images and the ostentation of sex, even in the secondary aspects of long sequences, reveals clearly pornographic intentions, resulting in an obscene display." Others were subject to strict conditions, like *Le schiave esistono ancora*, where authorisation was based upon the condition that scenes be eliminated: "The stripping scene in Beirut involving whipping, as well as the swimming pool bathroom in the harem of the white woman in which she appears totally nude and, still in the swimming pool of the harem, the final sequences in which the buttocks of the Arab girl are seen."

At times, the language of the censor becomes wholly surreal, it seems almost to extol the "lewd" aspects of the film, bringing to mind the educational tone of newsreels like *Settimana Incom* or *Mondo libero* with a little spice added in "innocuous" editorials. Films which were of social-cultural interest, with a notable influence, which express a homegrown attempt to come to terms with a world in total evolution, the clumsy opportunities to deal with the desires of a family-based society. The censors were ashamed, and even within their internal structures, different positions were voiced. Some members of the commission preferred to resign, rather than "arbitrate" the changes taking place in Italian society. And it could not have been at all easy to deal with a genre in which the exotic and the erotic melded into the titillating, such as was the case in the films of Gualtiero Jacopetti (formerly a challenger of moral norms with newsreels like *Panorama ciak* and *Ieri-Oggi-Domani*), self-styled documentaries like *Mondo cane n.1* (1962) with Paolo Cavara and Franco Prosperi, *Mondo cane n.2* (1963) with Prosperi, *La donna nel mondo* (*Women of the World*, 1962) with Cavara and Prosperi, *Africa Addio* (1966) with Prosperi. "A tour of visual recreation", as noted Franco Macchi in his film *Sexy che scotta* (1963), attempts to substitute the unpleasant complexities of society with pleasant landscape tracking shots or ocular excursions into faraway cultures and nations. Striptease anthologies which blended sex and the exotic in films like *Africa sexy* (1963) by Roberto Bianchi Montero, *Sexy nel mondo* (1963) by Roberto Bianchi Montero, *Sexy a Tahiti* (1964) by Umberto Bonsignori.<sup>8</sup>

Some members of the commission harshly criticised the mechanism of granting authorisation, and in April 1969, there was a series of resignations. The magistrate Giovanni Rosso begged the Minister to abandon his post of chairman of the commission; as did Tommaso D'Arienzo, the president of the local Rome Court of Appeal, Paolo Ziniti, Pietro Pascalino, of the Supreme Court of Appeal, as well as the magistrate Donato Massimo Bartolomei, who also declared "how today film production has brought immorality to new lows.

Cinema presents itself today as a state school of prostitution and delinquency: with increasingly pornographic displays (especially seen in the frequent homosexual and even sometimes incestuous relationships portrayed), and with evermore accentuated instances of hate, subversion and violence" (letter of resignation of 19 April 1969). He was perhaps referring to films made between 1969 and 1970, such as *Le sexe, cet inconnu* (Love: The Great Unknown, Max Hunter, authorisation no. 53512), *Inghilterra nuda* (Naked England, Vittorio De Sisti, authorisation no. 53667), *America così nuda, così violenta* (Sergio Martino, authorisation no. 56057), *Del sesso, materiali per un discorso politico* (Gianni Aringoli and Claudio Sestieri, authorisation no. 56406), *Le isole dell'amore* (Pino De Martino, authorisation no. 57280)<sup>9</sup>; all were deemed unsuitable for minors, for reasons of obscenity, repugnant sadism, erotic scenes, offence to the sensibility of minors, sexual inversions and perversions, gratuitous nudity and provocative gestures, the degradation of civilized behavior damaging to morality. While "real" cinema production overflows with an energy crushed for decades in the reserves of the most moralist of European societies and it is galvanized by Mondo movies and the writings of Herbert Marcuse and Wilhelm Reich, the idea of decency staggers; nothing else torments ministerial commissions quite as much in their growing difficulty in reining in sinful contemplation.<sup>10</sup>

In Italy, the "average" documentary – usually meant as a short film – remains a product which solidifies the sense of belonging to the State, it normalizes Italian TV viewing, illustrating the efforts to obtain that "arsenal of symbols and objects represented by the USA."<sup>11</sup> The vision of the country that emerges from the majority of these films is a curious mix of idyllic scenery and coveted modernism: a magical formula, far removed from local realities and the social deprivation which hits a great swath of the population. What is disturbing about films like *Il ballo delle vedove* by Giuseppe Ferrara (1963) – flunked on first examination due to the presence of breasts seen in the Argia folk dance scene in Sardinia – or *Ignoti alla città* (1958) by Cecilia Mangini, a refined documentary enriched by the commentary by Pier Paolo Pasolini. The latter has a densely urban feel to it; lower working-class kids from Rome survive by rummaging through the garbage, stealing from markets, messing about in suburban spaces. The film is unpretentious, redemption is a far cry from reality, there seems to be total acceptance of current conditions (the same can be said for the superb *L'antimiracolo*, 1965, a post-Neorealist film by Elio Piccon, midway between documentary and fiction, awarded at the XXVI Venice Film Festival and massacred by an incredible series of cuts by the censors).

Going back to Mangini's film, Pasolini's comment reveals that "these thousands of rebels and violent people are in truth far too resigned, they are far too willing to transform this injustice into an ancient and viable joy." We see them getting off the truck they are hanging about on, cigarettes hanging from their mouths, experience prematurely aging their faces: they saunter off, one combs his hair, another boxes the air. The film was not cleared for public screening for being "offensive to the reputation of national decency and because it shows scenes of crimes committed by minors without ever showing disapproval of the acts (stealing from the newspaper stand)." Upon appeal, the second degree film revision commission, chaired by the undersecretary of the Council of Ministers, the Hon. Raffaele Resta, expressed a favourable opinion for screening to the Italian public. But as was often the case, not for export abroad, as the film was considered to be "offensive to national decency." Mangini already has experience in cuts and delays by the censors for other films, including *All'armi, siam fascisti!* (with Lino Del Fra and Lino Micciché, 1962), a reflection on Italy's fascist period through

cinematic images. The film, representative of the stages of censorship it underwent, originated from the facts of July 1960, when the country was rocked by protests against the Tambroni government and the national Neo-fascist convention which was due to take place in Genova on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of that month. The response in many towns was spontaneous: the dockers of Genova and the trade unionists of Reggio Emilia, the labourers of Palermo and the unemployed of Catania invaded the streets, unleashing a violent reaction from the police, leading to eleven deaths and hundreds of people injured. And the indignation it caused in Italy – even Catholic intellectuals and Confindustria opposed Tambroni – forced the government to resign. During production, the Istituto Luce made the use of archive material difficult for *All'armi, siam fascisti!*; this was followed by censorship during its distribution to festivals, as well as cuts requested in order to obtain state authorisation. Some cinema owners boycotted the film (fearful of threats by right-wing extremists), while, paradoxically, some countries like Czechoslovakia put pressure on to eliminate undesirable scenes. I recall the violent attacks by the Movimento Sociale Italiano following the screening at the Quattro Fontane cinema in Rome, with threats and seats torn up and thrown at spectators coming out of the theatre. Common practice, reserved for other attempts at film reconstructions with general anti-fascism and humanist concepts, like *Benito Mussolini - Anatomia di un dittatore* (1962) by Mino Loy or *Benito Mussolini* (1962) by Pasquale Prunas<sup>12</sup>. At Loy's film, the Rome police stated that "at the Edelweiss cinema in Via Trionfale, during the screening of *Benito Mussolini - Anatomia di un dittatore*, the police found metal containers weighing half a kilo of unidentifiable material with 'Next time we'll do it for real' written on the label." (18 September 1962); the Messina police, Giarre section, stated that at the Garibaldi cinema "an explosive device was detonated containing undetermined explosive material which was placed in the toilet tank." (13 March 1962); in Massa, captain Raneri recalled that at the Guglielmi cinema "an anonymous phone call announced that a bomb had been planted" and that "under the public's seats, a cardboard box containing an alarm clock wired to two tubes was found" (8 February 1962). A series of threats, direct and indirect, which enclosed the anti-fascist desires to observe the fascist period via the overthrowing of propaganda images of the time: "The Government cannot stop the new generations from knowing the truth about fascism and its accomplices," was written on a telegram of sympathy sent by Del Fra, Mangini and Micciché to Loy, following the first refusal by the censors for the screening of his film (10 May 1961).

Writing history via cinematic images remains a risky but thrilling practice. Happily modulating the relationship between sound and vision is a challenge to the banality of the pre-prepared documentary made with assured funding: a rare quality, and which can cause controversy, as occurred between Roberto Rossellini and Etrusca Cinematografica, which was barred from using Rosellini's name as writer of *Benito Mussolini* (which was subsequently directed by Prunas), considering their total disagreement over the verbal contents of the film (15 January 1962)<sup>13</sup>. This film was also subject to cuts by the censors – with the elimination of the scenes in Piazzale Loreto and corpses being removed with a digger as they were "foul, repugnant and cruel" (18 January 1962). This was followed by various assaults in cinemas, with Molotov cocktails, stink bombs, agitation and vocal disturbances during screenings.

Ours is a brief excursion which explores film censorship from the end of WWII to the 1970s, revealing the difficulties in this process and in the acquisition of the right to free expression. In general, the almost total lack of publication on documentary film censorship means that this examination is just the first step in a research project which we hope will be amplified. The general revaluation of documentary cinema, from its stories to its theories, has to wade through hundreds of ministerial dossiers which have been, so far, kept under the covers. Mediating the admissibility of what is real through cinema means transforming the ministerial commission and their censorship into objects of study of great cultural value. It means the transformation

from an authoritarian country into a freer thinking one, with regards to what is acceptable, from the widespread paternalism of institutions to the awareness that a realistic image of the world, perhaps even more so than through fiction films, contains all the values of our much fought-for democracy.

<sup>1</sup> Cfr. David W. Ellwood, *L'impatto del Piano Marshall sull'Italia*, in Gian Piero Brunetta (edited by), *Identità italiana e identità europea nel cinema italiano dal 1945 al miracolo economico*, Edizioni della Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli, Turin, 1996, p. 108.

<sup>2</sup> Anna Maria Ortese, *Il mare non bagna Napoli*, Einaudi, Turin, 1953.

<sup>3</sup> Carlo Lizzani, Il documentario alla retroguardia, *Cinema*, 35, March 1950, cit. in Roberto Nepoti, *Gli anni del documentario (1945-1965)*, in Lino Micciché (edited by), *Studi su dodici sguardi d'autore in cortometraggio*, Associazione Philip Morris Progetto Cinema, Lindau, Turin-Rome, 1995, p. 32.

<sup>4</sup> *Libro bianco sul cortometraggio italiano*, edited by the documentary division of ANAC (Associazione Nazionale Autori Cinematografici), cyclostyle edition, Rome, May 1966, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> I'm referring to *Modena città dell'Emilia rossa* (1950), *I fatti di Modena* (1950) and *Nel Mezzogiorno qualcosa è cambiato* (1949).

<sup>6</sup> Carlo Lizzani, Addio documentario, *Filmcritica*, 2, June 1951, p. 39.

<sup>7</sup> In 1961, on the occasion of the 2nd Festival Internazionale del Film Industriale in Turin, ANICA published *Il cinema al servizio dell'industria*, a reflection on technofilm, in which there was an attempt to classify the seven genres.

<sup>8</sup> Some magazines extended the media circus: *King Cinemondo* is a monthly in which reviews of *La caduta degli dei* (1969) by Luchino Visconti or *Dillinger è morto* (1968) by Marco Ferreri are flanked by "photo stories" of films like *Bora Bora* (1968) by Ugo Liberatore, where the star, Corrado Pani, discovers his wife in flagrante with her Tahitian lover. But the finest in the genre is *Cinesex*, specialising in sexy photo stories like *La peccatrice adolescente* (1969) by Roger Fritz or *L'isola delle svedesi* (1969) by Silvio Amadio.

<sup>9</sup> "This ban is due to the scenes in which animals are tortured and the eroticism rife in the whole film" (letter from the commission, 25 November 1960).

<sup>10</sup> Just 15 years earlier, in a note of 10 June 1954 to the undersecretary of State about the film *Eva nera* by Guglielmo Tolomei (authorisation n. 16718): "There is disagreement between the two external members and the chairman of the other; the formers feel it should be banned for under-16s for morality, the chairman thinks it should be without limitations but with certain scenes edited."

<sup>11</sup> Silvio Lanaro, *L'Italia nuova. Identità e sviluppo 1861-1988*, Einaudi, Turin, 1988, p. 82.

<sup>12</sup> In *L'Unità*, Ugo Casiraghi writes that *All'armi, siam fascisti!* "is finally that talks about Fascism, that traces its growth, its misdeeds and the consequences and judges it from the ideology of the working class." *L'Unità*, 3 May 1962.

<sup>13</sup> With regards to language revision, suppression or modifications of dialogue, please refer to examples made by Sergio Raffaelli, *Censure sommerse*, Leonardo Quaresima, Alessandra Raengo, Laura Vichi (edited by), *I limiti della rappresentazione: censura, visibile, modi di*

*rappresentazione nel cinema*, Convegno Internazionale di Studi sul Cinema, Dipartimento di Storia e Tutela dei Beni Culturali, Università degli Studi di Udine, Forum, Udine, 2000, pp. 432-433.

Marco Bertozzi is part of the group of authors who, in the past few years, have contributed to the rebirth of the Italian documentary, with a strong bias towards theoretical commitment (*Storia del documentario italiano, 2008, winner of the Limina Award and the Premio Domenico Meccoli as best book on cinema of the year*), teaching (at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, at DAMS at Roma Tre, at the Scuola Volonté in Rome) and cultural promotion (with Villa Medici, the Premio Solinas, the Archivio audiovisivo del movimento operaio, the Associazione Italiana Documentaristi, the Cinémathèque de Montreal). He teaches documentary making and experimental cinema at the Università IUAV in Venice.

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