

## Document Citation

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Uccellacci e Uccellini (Hawks and Sparrows)

Pasolini

--You changed style with Uccellacci e Uccellini, too: initially, it was supposed to be what you called an 'ideo-comic' film, but it didn't exactly come out like that.

Well, I don't know, perhaps it came out too much like that: too 'ideo' and not 'comic' enough (anyway that was a formula I just invented for fun, it's not a serious category). As for the change of style, I think I have a basic style which I will always have: there is a basic continuity from Accattone onwards through The Gospel, which is obviously part of my psychology and my pathology, which as you know is unchangeable (even Theorem, which I was going to shoot in a completely different way, has come out with analogous features to the others). In Uccellacci e Uccellini I think the new element was that I tried to make it more cinema--there are almost no references to the figurative arts, and many more explicit references to other films. Uccellacci e Uccellini is the product of a cinematographic rather than a figurative culture, unlike Accattone. It is about the end of neo-realism, particularly the beginning about two characters living out their life without thinking about it--i.e. two typical heroes of neo-realism, humble, humdrum and unaware. All the first part is an evocation of neo-realism, though naturally an idealized neo-realism. There are other bits like the clowns episode which are deliberately intended to evoke Fellini and Rossellini. Some critics accused me of being Fellinian in that episode, but they did not understand that it was a quotation from Fellini; in fact immediately afterwards the crow talks to the two of them and says 'The age of Brecht and Rossellini is finished.' The whole episode was a long quotation.

--You don't think the critics got confused between what you were saying and what the crow was saying?

I don't think so, because the crow is extremely autobiographical: there is almost total identity between me and the crow.

--How did you fix the crow?

That crow was a really wild mad beast and it nearly drove all the rest of us mad as well. In fact, one of the comic sketches I thought of doing was one where Toto and Ninetto would be the owners of a crow like this, because it was an enormous struggle, the toughest fight of my life. Generally a director's main worry in Italy is the sun, because the weather in Rome is very unreliable. But after the weather my biggest worry was this crow. The bits there are with it in the film I managed to get together only by shooting again and again and then organizing the montage very carefully, but it was a terrible ordeal. Then the crow died, which upset Ninetto a great deal, so when he went to India and saw all the crows there he felt he was among friends again because a kind of omerta had been established between him and the crows.

--How about Toto? You took a chance using him, because he was already a famous comic actor in Italy, but very much a typed actor. Do you think he was too much associated with a certain character in the Italian mind--though to an outsider he was fine?

I chose Toto for what he was--an actor, a recognizable type whom the public already knew. I didn't want him to be anything but what he was. Poor Toto, he used to ask me very gently, almost like a child, if he could make a more serious film, and I used to have to say 'No, no I just want you to be yourself.' The real Toto was in fact manipulated, he wasn't a straightforward ingenuous character like Franco Citti in Accattone. Toto was an actor who had been manipulated by himself and by other people into a type, but I used him precisely as that, as someone who was a type. He was a strange mixture of credulousness and popular Neapolitan authenticity on the one hand and of a clown on the other--i.e. recognizable and neo-realist and also slightly absurd and surreal. That is why I chose him, and that is what he was, even in the worst films he ever made.

--How did you find Ninetto Davoli?

I met him by chance when I was making La Ricotta--he was there with a whole lot of other



Toto is not a petit bourgeois. His real personality came through and so there was something wrong about the whole episode, although superficially it may have looked all right. Toto just was not a petit bourgeois who would go round and teach good manners to other people.

--I found this is a very difficult film indeed, not comic at all, though ideological & sad.

That's a personal impression. I agree it is not very funny, it makes you think more than laugh. But when it was put on in Montreal and New York the audiences laughed a lot, to my great astonishment, unlike in Italy, where they were a bit disappointed, mainly because they went to see Toto and have their usual laugh, which they gradually realized they weren't going to be able to do. Your reaction may be a bit subjective, though I agree it is not a funny film.

--Do you ever have a sneak preview?

They do exist, but I've never had one. They sometimes do it for commercial films--they put them on in towns which are supposed to represent the lowest common denominator of potential audiences. The only time I ever see one of my films with an audience is at a festival--Oedipus, for example, I saw complete for the first time at Venice. I've never dared to go in and watch one of my films in a normal showing in a public cinema.

--I'd like to go back to what you said before about neo-realism. There are two problems.

One is about Rossellini: the films he made under fascism are stylistically the same as those he made during the so-called neo-realist period and the same as his later movies, right up to La Prise de Pouvoir par Louis XIV, which is neo-realist in the sense that Francesco is. For me Rossellini is a great--and homogeneous--director. The other problem is the whole categorization of a period as 'neo-realist', lumping together two people like Fellini and Rossellini whom I simply can't consider on the same level, and that would go for almost everybody I know in England. I can see that U & U is about aspects of Italian cinema, but I would like to understand more precisely your attitude to Rossellini & neo-realism.

The stylistic history of Rossellini is the stylistic history of Rossellini, and as I have said before there is a certain fatality in a person's style. Rossellini has a consistent stylistic history, but it is not co-extensive with the history of neo-realism: part of his history coincides with part of neo-realism. The part of Rossellini that coincides with neo-realism has some features in common with Fellini: a certain way of seeing things and people, the way they are shot and the montage are different from the classical cinema which preceded both Fellini and Rossellini. Obviously Fellini and Rossellini are 2 absolutely different personalities, but the period each of them has in common with neo-realism gives them something in common with each other. The bit of U & U you've just mentioned which evokes neo-realism, evokes something typical of both part of Rossellini and part of Fellini: the acrobats, the kind of woman--all that is fairly Fellinian, but it is also Rossellinian. Also they both share what I call 'creatural realism', which is a feature of neo-realism typical of a film like Francesco, Ciullare di Dio: a humble person viewed in a somewhat comic way, piety mixed with irony. I think they both have that. But on the whole I agree with you, they are 2 directors who have nothing to do with each other, but they both chronologically share a common cultural period which coincides with neo-realism.

--So when the crow says 'The age of Brecht and Rossellini is finished' he didn't mean Rossellini is finished, just neo-realism.

Yes, Rossellini was the master of neo-realism and neo-realism is finished. I meant that the age of social denunciation and great ideological drama of the Brecht kind on the one hand and the day-to-day denunciation of the neo-realist kind on the other are both finished.

--One of the Italian critics defined your film as the first realist film in Italy. I think U & U is a realist film, but in very much the same way as Francesco could be called realist--in fact all the part of U & U with the monks draws heavily on Rossellini's film.

I love Rossellini, and I love him above all for Francesco, which is his finest film. Realism is such an ambiguous and loaded word that it is hard to agree on its meaning. I consider my own films realist compared with neo-realist films. In neo-realist films day-to-day reality is seen from a crepuscular, intimistic, credulous and above all naturalistic point of view. Not naturalistic in the classic sense--cruel, violent and poetic as in Verga, or total as in Zola; in neo-realism things are described with a certain detachment, with human warmth mixed with irony--characteristics which I do not have. Compared with neo-realism, I think I have introduced a certain realism, but it would be rather hard to define it exactly.

--You said that 'ideological irony' would be useful for analysing U & U: was this more to do with the condition of the Italian cinema or with the condition of ideology & politics?

Both. In England or France or America people do not remember the industrial revolution and the transition to prosperity. In Italy this transition has just taken place. What took a century in England has virtually happened in 20 years here. This explosion produced an ideological crisis which particularly threatened the position of marxism, and coinciding with this there was a big cultural change here as well. That is what I was referring to