

**Lucio Fulci's Poetics of Attractions:
The Cinema of Poetry and the "Southern Question"
in *Don't Torture a Duckling***

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"The Northern bourgeoisie has subjugated the South of Italy and the Islands, and reduced them to exploitable colonies; by emancipating itself from capitalist enslavement, the Northern proletariat will emancipate the Southern peasant masses enslaved to the banks and the parasitic industry of the North."

— Antonio Gramsci, from "The Southern Question" (1926)

For my nonno Giuseppe, who was known to his friends as "Mastro Peppino"—a term of dignity for those who were masters of their trade in Southern Italy.

Lucio Fulci's *Don't Torture a Duckling* (*Non si sevizia un paperino*, 1972) opens with an extreme long shot of a picturesque pastoral scene—a chain of low, rolling mountains and grassy knolls, underscored by the distant echo of a (possibly peasant) woman singing. However, typical of the Italian *filone* (genre) film's shifting intensities, the shot does not linger on this quaint setting, but slowly pans and zooms left to show an elevated *Autostrada* (a freeway in the Italian highway system) snaking through the pastoral countryside (Figure 1, next page). A tiny ant-like car passes and fades into the distance, moving against the direction of the pan. This contra-movement is a sign of tension, as is the modern concrete highway structure itself, its towering support pillars pressed onto the landscape. Over this image of diegetic and camera movement appear the names of the cast "in alphabetical order": Florinda Bolkan, Barbara Bouchet, Tomas Milian, Marc Porel, Georges Wilson. Because the titles focus the spectator on the names of the cast, the emphasis on movement and tension in the image is more likely to be felt only semi-consciously. There is a

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quick jump cut to a zoomed-in image of the *Autostrada*—darker in tone for the mere fact that the concrete and steel of the highway and its monstrous risers now take precedence in the frame (Figure 2). Typical of Fulci's excessive and intentional use of the zoom lens, the camera continues to pan along with the snaking *Autostrada*,¹ inching closer to the loopy, winding geometry of the highway structure, skewing perspective and rendering the landscape increasingly abstract and tactile—haptic. The highway's concrete graininess and the darker foliage next to it begin to show in more detail, further skewing perspective on the wider scene to focus on surfaces. When the film's typically evocative *giallo* title appears, the spectator's attention is then once again refocused from the tactile abstraction of the combined zoom-movement and snaky geometry of the shot to the intimation of an even more dreadful tactility in the explicit, prohibitive violence of “tortur[ing] a duckling.”



Figures 1 (above) and 2 (below)

I highlight the details of *Duckling's* multilayered opening moments as a way to read against perceptions that Fulci's film promotes typical anti-Southern

Italian perspectives. The Southern Question, as it has been called since the nineteenth century in Italy, is the construction of the South as “other” by the North in Italy, but it is not to be found in signifying representations of Southern peoples in Fulci’s film. I argue instead that Fulci’s cinema of attractions, where torture is front and center, confronts spectators with dreadful material surfaces that advance a politicized championing of the South, and that the *Autostrada* is key to this configuration. *Duckling’s* title sequence opens wide, but draws the spectator closer and closer to a focus on the contradictory, even combatant, materiality and surfaces of the film’s locality. After the title card disappears, Fulci trains his camera onto a grassy and rocky mound where there is blurred movement, out of focus for an instant that is accentuated by the echoing strings of Riz Ortolani’s score. The influence of Alfred Hitchcock’s *Psycho* (1960)—another film about modern highways slicing through the landscape—on the *giallo* can be heard in Ortolani’s arrangement; the strings here resemble a slow-motion version of Bernard Herrmann’s immersive score. The strings also create a tension with the pastoral qualities of the scene produced by the distant singing. A rack focus on a pair of bloody, muddy hands digging follows. The camera zooms in on these hands, rendering the surrounding blades of grass impressively large, comparable to the concrete pillars of the *Autostrada*, which all the while has remained in view in the corner of the wide shot (Figure 3).



Figure 3

The spectator does not know where they are, or who is digging. A second jump cut to a shot of the same hands reveals the title card, “a film by Lucio Fulci,” and finally tilts up to a woman’s face, again with the *Autostrada* slightly out of focus in the background. While Fulci’s focus is often on gritty and

bloody attractions, like the digging hands, the face of the woman in the shot resonates with the cinema of Pier Paolo Pasolini. The centrality of the face is a key component in all of Pasolini's cinema, and as I will argue, shapes the politics of Southern Italy in the same manner as Fulci's gory attractions. Following this focus on the acute materiality of surfaces, this paper is less a comprehensive analysis of *Duckling* as it is a selective reading of what I will call his "poetics of attractions." Again, Fulci's horror attractions are like Pasolini's faces: they are material landscapes that do not reveal representationally, but engage affectively and corporeally. Hence, I will be reading a selection of key scenes from Fulci and Pasolini's work as a way to engage the political issues they present outside of dominant narrative-based studies in cinema.

The opening three shots of Fulci's *Don't Torture a Duckling* encourage this article's focus on the politics of Northern hegemony over the South in Italy. Following Pasolini, these themes can be evinced in Fulci's own immersive "cinema of poetry," where the tensions of movement and stasis (panning, zooming, abstraction), of clashes of diegetic pastoral singing and non-diegetic strings, and of the tactile abstraction of landscape (concrete pillars and grassy ones; digging, bloodied hands) through the use of extreme close-ups and long shots all render corporeally the issues of so-called development and underdevelopment in Italy. I bring Fulci into conversation with Pasolini in this essay because they were both heretical Marxists shaped by Catholicism who championed the South as a space of radical otherness. If Pasolini romanticized the South and championed its semi-pagan religiosity, Fulci's version of the South in *Don't Torture a Duckling* was pessimistic; it was a place where the afterlife of Northern hegemony over the South lingered.

This essay focuses on the affective materiality and dreadful tactility of Fulci's film, evinced in the credit sequence's focus on the fictional Southern Italian town of Accendura, whose "witch" Maciara (Florinda Bolkan) digs up what will later be revealed as the bones of a buried infant. Scratching away that surface with bloodied hands, the witch uncovers traumas that are not buried deep, but seem to prick at the surface of people's lives in that region. Telegraphed by the tensions in movement, abstraction, and geographical unease of the opening shots of *Duckling*, Fulci's cinema of attractions is anchored by haptic shock, where dreadful intrusions into the Southern region by *Autostradas* are experienced more viscerally and corporeally than cognitively. The place of dreadful surfaces will reappear later in the film with the torture and lynching of Maciara—a scene that, like the credit sequence outlined here, renders its political perspective corporeally via haptic attractions.

The *Mezzogiorno Giallo*

Duckling's credit sequence immerses the spectator in the world of what Xavier Mendik aptly calls the “*Mezzogiorno giallo*” (2014), a small but significant number of *gialli* that are situated in the *Mezzogiorno* (Southern) region of Italy, and operate around urban/rural, North/South binaries in an era from 1969-1978 called *gli anni di piombo* (the leaden times).² According to Mikel J. Koven, “much like in the slasher films of the late 1970s and early 1980s (which the *giallo* certainly influenced [...])” the *giallo's* “isolating the action, particularly in the outskirts of the metropolitan city, challenges the complacency of the modern age” (2006: 530). For Koven, there is a critique of modernity encoded in the presence of the rural as other in the Italian *giallo*. I argue below that *Don't Torture a Duckling* does not simply ‘challenge the complacency of the modern age’, which I certainly agree with, but that Fulci also materially immerses the spectator in the ravages of North/South asymmetries via his poetics of attractions—through his use of claustrophobic 2.35:1 framing and aural tapestries of shock. Koven’s research on the *giallo* is notable for placing the genre within the category of the *filone* and also because he discusses the *filone's* reception within its specific milieu of the *terza visione*, or “third tier” screening houses in Italy that are similar to North American grindhouses and drive-ins. In the context of the Italian film industry, the term *filone* refers to the more popular traditions of genre that find their origins in clusters or streams of popular cinema. It is therefore more accurate than *genere*, the word for “genre” in Italian, which tends to refer to more literary traditions. The use of the term *filone* reminds one that Italy has its own cycles and traditions that follow a different logic, even if the *filone* is often discussed as low-end mimicry of superior genre material from the U.S.A.³ Koven writes that “[p]erhaps, in some cases, what we think of as a film genre, like the *giallo*, may be a cluster of concurrent streamlets, veins, or traditions—*filone*” (2006, 6). In this sense, the *Mezzogiorno giallo* is a *filone* in that there is a small stream of films that operate specifically around the Southern Question.

The term *giallo* refers to a diverse cycle of films that is difficult to pin down. As Gary Needham reminds, “[i]t should be understood then that the *giallo* is something different to [*sic*] that which is conventionally analysed as a genre. The Italians have the word *filone*, which is often used to refer to both genres and cycles as well as to currents and trends” (2002, 1). The genre’s founding texts—Mario Bava’s first two *gialli*, *The Women Who Knew too Much* (*La ragazza che sapeva troppo*, 1963) and the trend setting body-count film *Blood and Black Lace* (*Sei donne per l'assassino*, 1964)—announce the distinctly

cosmopolitan roots of the Italian *giallo*. In the opening scene of the former film, Bava's main character Nora Davis (Letícia Román), a tourist coming to Rome, is on a plane reading a *giallo* paperback. And in the latter film, Bava sets his murder mystery in a fashion house. Consumer capitalism (tourism and fashion) are directly linked to urban development and important features of post-WWII Italian life. In this sense, it is important to remember that Bava also made *Bay of Blood* (*Reazione a catena*) in 1971, which is set in Sabaudia, a coastal city 50 miles outside of Rome, where the line between rural and urban is blurred.⁴ The *giallo*, in other words, typically inhabits spaces in between convenient social, cultural, economic, and regional dichotomies. Mendik's term "*Mezzogiorno giallo*" is thus significant as it speaks to the construction of a typically *imaginary* South in the *giallo*. There are films such as Dario Argento's *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage* (*L'uccello dalle piume di cristallo*, 1970), for example, where a kind of barbaric rurality is figured as Southern, even though the film isn't set there. The investigation of the film's iconic amateur detective Sam Dalmas (Tony Musante) takes him to "an unspecified and barbaric rural landscape that is the site of repressed knowledge" (Mendik, 2014: 393-394). Mendik recalls that "[e]ven when the *giallo* did figure its central protagonists as Italian nationals, an element of 'foreignness' was included into a range of entries detailing a detective's journey into Italy's more 'primitive' regions" (2014: 390). In the *Mezzogiorno giallo*, rural types and spaces typically take on a mythical primitivism, a divisive otherness by which the "civilized" / urban North can define/contrast itself. Italian *giallo* filmmakers⁵ have used rurality as a way to critique asymmetrical development in contemporary Italy and Fulci's film falls within these parameters even more explicitly.

While its city of Accendura is fictional, Fulci's *Don't Torture a Duckling* is actually the only *giallo* set in the actual South, not the constructed, unspecified/mythical rural one. Mendik erroneously situates Pupi Avati's *The House with Laughing Windows* (*La casa dalle finestre che ridono*, 1976) in this category, but that film is set in the Northern region of Emilia-Romagna.⁶ Koven mistakenly notes the location of Fulci's *Duckling* as a "a small, rural Apulian village," when it is in fact never stated in which Southern region the film takes place (2006: 53). And in her excellent piece on Fulci in *Senses of the Cinema*, Patricia MacCormack calls *Don't Torture a Duckling* a "claustrophobic Calabrian village murder mystery" (2004), again attributing a specificity that the film does not indicate. These misidentifications are not wrong on one level: *Don't Torture a Duckling* is, indeed, about Apuglia and Calabria because it is a film concerned with the South more generally; it is therefore easy to misidentify the location of the film's fictional city. I am reminded here of how

the mythical St-Sebastian stands in for Haiti in the Val Lewton-produced *I Walked with a Zombie* (Jacques Tourneur, 1943). In this film, the issues of colonialism and white supremacy stand out powerfully in its fictional location *because* there is a distancing from the actuality of a real historical place. *I Walked with a Zombie* is a subversive anti-colonial film that operates around aural and spatial take-overs that give power to the black folk of the fictional island.⁷ Similarly, *Duckling* is a subversive film where the fictional Accendura is a space for Fulci to challenge Northern and Catholic hegemony with an often shocking attractions cinema style. In the film, Andrea Martelli (Tomas Milian) is a journalist from Rome who meets Patrizia (Barbara Bouchet), exiled to the family home in Accendura by her rich Milanese father, attempt to solve a series of child murders happening in the village. Patrizia is perceived as an outsider by the locals because she exhibits spoiled cosmopolitan values. The Northern police bureau is called in to aid in the investigation. Maciara is shown digging up skeletal remains and plunging pins in the heads of dolls. She becomes a suspect and is arrested by the police. But after her release, even though the police have shown her to be innocent, she is lynched by a local mob. Patrizia now becomes a suspect, as she is also perceived as an outsider. The killer is ultimately revealed to be the local priest, Don Alberto Avallone (Marc Porel), who falls off a cliff and dies in the film's climax. In shocking imagery characteristic of Fulci's style, a prolonged sequence shows the priest's face scraping violently along the jagged rocks as he falls to his death. Similar to *I Walked with a Zombie*, it is easy to miss the material and spatial aspects in representational readings that have placed the film in an essentialist mode of propagating stereotypes of Southern life. Like the Tourneur film, the unspecified place of Accendura in *Duckling* forces a more obvious focus on its anti-colonial issues.

Fulci's film was shot in the town of Matera, in the Southern region of Basilicata. It is a location that resonates within the history of Italian cinema, as many films were shot there,⁸ and a location that is widely perceived by Northern Italians as the one of the most beautiful cities in the South. Like St-Sebastian in *I Walked with a Zombie*, the distancing of Accendura as fictional paradoxically brings the film in closer proximity to the issues of North/South asymmetries as they speak to broader regional histories. And like Tourneur's film, Fulci's fleshy material attractions—his attention to corporeality and the senses, where haptic reception carries political meaning (as in the opening scene)—is where one experiences his championing of the South. What interests me here is not the uniqueness of the film as the sole *Mezzogiorno giallo*, but its championing of the South, and its critique of Northern Italian

hegemony, through Fulci's attractions sensibility. My contention in this article is that the politics of Northern hegemony operate in the corporeal immersive shock of attractions in the film, rather the registers of narrative-based representation (e.g., the film's North-invades-South investigation narrative). Fulci was influenced by the Marxist critique of Northern hegemony in the radical sixties, especially through the cinema and writings of heretical Marxist Pier Paolo Pasolini. Understanding how Fulci's critical attractions sensibility works requires a discussion of how the construction of the Southern Question emerges in the nineteenth century, and is later challenged by Antonio Gramsci in the 1920s.

The Southern Question

My *nonno* (grandfather) came to Canada in 1949 from Calabria, the very tip of the toe of Italy's boot. That migration of my family from this region speaks volumes about the place of the South in the construction of modern Italy. My *nonno* did not experience the so-called economic miracle of the 1950s, nor did he witness the building of the Autostrada A3, whose extension to Calabria from Napoli was only begun by the Italian government in 1964. For the state, the highway was a major event announcing the South's arrival into modernity. Migration in my family away from that region was linked to the economic asymmetries in post WWII Italy that continue to exist. While some of my family left for Canada and the USA, my *nonno*'s younger brother went to Patterson, NJ, and a number of my cousins moved to Torino in order to find work in factories for corporations like Fiat. They made the move to escape rural poverty to the promises of a new life in the cosmopolitan centres in Italy and abroad. The American Dream was a powerful force for rural peasants like my *nonno*, who, like many Southern Italians, worked in construction building the cities to which they moved. The iconic saying by an anonymous Italian migrant on Ellis Island rings true in the experience of my *nonno*: "Before I came to America, I thought the streets were paved with gold. When I came here I learned three things: The streets were not paved with gold, the streets weren't paved, and that I was expected to pave them." Growing up, my *nonno* lived with us, and I remember his often using the expression "*sto Cristiano*" ("that Christian") to describe friends from the old country. He used term in the same manner one would use the word "person" in regular conversation: "that Christian Giovanni came to see us today." I never quite understood why he used this term, and simply took it as one of his idiosyncrasies from the old

country. It was only after reading *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, a memoir by the physician Carlo Levi⁹ (1945), which describes Levi's exile under the Fascist regime to the Southern Italy region of Basilicata, that I understood my *nonno's* expression. Benito Mussolini used the South as an informal gulag during his reign and Levi writes about the intense poverty that he encountered there in the thirties. The title of the book comes from an expression by the people of the Gagliano, who say of themselves, "Christ stopped *short of here*, at Eboli" which was the location on the Southern edge of Campania, South of Napoli, where the road and railway to Basilicata branched away from the coastal North-South routes in that period. Eboli was the doorway to the perceived primitive and archaic frontier,¹⁰ where the humanizing influence of Christianity did not take hold. In the novel, the people in the fictional town of Gagliano feel they have been bypassed by Christianity and the state. Levi recounted that he encountered a people bypassed by history: "[t]hey do not and cannot have what is called political awareness, because they are literally *pagani*, 'pagans', or countrymen, as distinguished from city-dwellers" (1974: 77). Thus, my *nonno's* use of the term *Cristiano* comes from this experience of being perceived as pagan, pre-Christian with all its ethical and moral implications. His re-claiming of the term *Cristiano* was a reclaiming of his humanity and dignity—not a championing of Christian morality, but a challenge to colonial perspectives that dehumanized him as a "*terrone*" (a term of insult for a Southern peasant still used today).

Since before the *Risorgimento* (the Italian unification, a period that stretched from 1815 to 1871), Southern Italy was constructed as backward, underdeveloped, primitive, and poor. According to Jennifer Guglielmo this construction is also racialized. In her introduction to the provocatively titled book, *Are Italians White?: How Race is Made in America*, Guglielmo writes, "Indeed, the saying 'Europe ends at Naples. Calabria, Sicily, and all the rest belong to Africa' can still be heard throughout Europe, and these ideologies of Southerners as backward continue to inform national political movements" (2003: 9). The French philosopher, anthropologist and historian Ernest Renan wrote in 1850 that while Napoli seduced travelers with the beauty of its landscapes, Salerno (in Southern Campania), his last stop on his voyage to Southern Italy, was "la limite de la civilization au midi," or "the frontier of civilization in the *Mezzogiorno*" (2004: 120, my translation). Positivist anthropologists like Renan advanced a racist science in the mid-19th century that promoted the Aryan race above those from the South mixing with African. Guglielmo reminds how Alfredo Niceforo "argued in his widely read study, *L'Italia barbara contemporeana*, that two Italys existed, whose fundamental

racial differences made unification impossible” (2003: 33). Often these constructions can be perceived in religious practices that have been characterized by a history of “orientalist” discourses (Said: 1978). For example, the designation of Southern Italy as “the Indies of Europe” by eighteenth century Northern Jesuits in their memoirs came about because the often syncretic religious practices of Southerners were perceived to be more pagan, than the religions of America’s Indigenous peoples (Grafton, 2009: 173).

The shockumentary *Mondo Cane* (1962) by Paolo Cavara, Gualtiero Jacopetti, and Franco Prosperi, presents religious practices in Southern Italy as barbaric. In this film, excessive mortification of the flesh undergirds Good Friday processions in the Calabrese city of Nocera Terinese, in the province of Catanzaro. The *Mondo* film uses shock to situate itself politically, and in the procession scene, audiences are pressed into re-imagining so-called primitive Catholic practices as a deeply corporeal expression of religious knowledge in opposition to both church and state power. The voice-over narration in *Mondo Cane* notes that police officers visible in the scene are attempting to prevent the popular rites on the orders of the parish priest, as these rites are happening in opposition to the official church teachings. Yet, from a different perspective (and in the proper context), the images of practitioners inflicting cuts on their legs with shards of glass imbedded in pieces of cork, in a ritual called the “rites of the Vattienti,” is—against the dominant (mis)understanding of popular Catholicism—*productively corporeal*, using the body and the senses to short circuit the common sense of the official church. The practitioners of the rites are not simply attempting to subdue sinful flesh, but using corporeality as a form of religious knowledge that also expresses itself as a means to revolt against church authority. While this scene from *Mondo Cane* presents the South as excessively religious, it does so in a way that situates the visceral onscreen as a form of corporeal knowledge that operates as (an)other form of epistemology—one that even works in tension with the film’s expository voice-over. Fulci figures the South quite similarly in *Don’t Torture a Duckling*: in terms of a corporeal materiality that takes the audience beyond singular avenues of representation. My reading of *Don’t Torture a Duckling* falls in line with “post-representational” readings in recent scholarship that focus on the interrelational, immersiveness, intensity, and affect as a starting point (Shaviro, 1993; Abel, 2007). For Fulci, the spatial materiality of the South of Italy short-circuits common sense bourgeois notions of so-called primitive practices, such as the intricate doll-making practices of Maciara, which are usually associated with Hatian Vodou. Recalling the film’s early images of her scratching open the earth with bloodied fingers, Maciara’s tactile relationship with this intricate

practice parallels the way she experiences her region—through direct, visceral contact. Here, as elsewhere in his work—whether it is the cosmic eternality of space in the exquisite final scenes of the Lovecraftian *The Beyond* (*E tu vivrai nel terrore! L'aldilà*, 1981), or the labyrinthine jungle of the fictional Caribbean Matul Island in *Zombie* (*Zombi 2*, 1979)—Fulci relies on the material otherness of space, place and body to shock audiences into new pathways beyond the cognitive and the causal.

Fulci's relationship to the Mondo aesthetic is key to understanding the way *Duckling* subverts Italy's stereotypically bigoted North-over-South discourse. A very popular form whose influence on Italian horror is under-researched (Shipka, 2011), Mondo shockumentaries are full-on attractions documentaries. They enact their critique through deployments of spectacular otherness that borders on (and sometimes arguably is) exploitative of the "exotic other"—bodies, spaces, cultures. Part of the productive work of the shockumentary occurs in its way of straddling the spectator between critical distance and immersive sensation, to create a space of questioning, of shock—of uncomfortable pleasure and pleasurable revulsion.¹¹ The best Mondo films, such as *Mondo Cane* and its follow-up, *Mondo Pazzo* (Gualtieri, Jacopetti, and Prosperi, 1963), hold up a mirror to the "barbaric North," or barbaric cosmopolitan, that was deeply transgressive in the context of post-WWII progress-focused discourses. In their inversion of North-South dichotomies, these films can be understood as a championing of the South, and consequently the global South, because they operate outside of the colonial dynamic that sees the so-called archaic Southern frontier as the measure by which the capitalist and modernizing North constructed its own identity of civility.

Don't Torture a Duckling was shot in Basilicata, in the stunning Medieval town of Matera where many films have been shot, including more recently some religious films, such as Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* (2004) and Abel Ferrara's *Mary* (2005). Years before these films, Pier Paolo Pasolini shot part of his beautiful Marxist-inflected religious film, *Gospel According to Matthew* (*Il vangelo secondo matteo*, 1964) in Matera. Pasolini's filmmaking in Matera, revolutionary and iconoclastic (even if the official church applauded the film),¹² and his Marxist politics more generally, are a crucial link to the location of *Duckling's* shooting and politics. About the *Gospel*, Pasolini says: "The whole film was shot in Southern Italy. I had decided to do this even before I went to Palestine, which I only did to set my conscience at ease. I knew I would remake the Gospel by analogy" (1970: 82). It is deeply ironic that a heretical Marxist would bring Christianity back to the South, so to speak, the pagan

place where Christ has ‘not set foot’. I label Pasolini a heretical Marxist because of his love of the sacred and mythical in all things pre-modern—the sacralization of the mundane and everyday world which is dominant in so many films, such as *Theorem* (*Teorema*, 1968) and his “Trilogy of Life” films.¹³ Pasolini’s love of the religious primitive comes from his appreciation of his mother Susanna’s everyday peasant Catholicism from the Northern region of Friuli, which he distinguished from the petty bourgeois Fascist Catholicism of his father. Pasolini’s long-time interest in the sacred frustrated mainstream Marxists who rejected religion as a form of alienation or mystification. In his early films, Pasolini found this pre-modern religious vitality in Southern Italy, and in his later films he sought this in the so-called “Third World,” outside of the conformist impetus of Western capitalism. Pasolini wrote in 1965, “[b]ut today we are in a transitory phase: the relationship between the North and South is no longer colonial, but neocolonial” (1988: 47). Shooting *Gospel According to Matthew* in Southern Italy was not an attempt to Christianize the South, but a way to champion—or in terms of my *nonno*, to reclaim the dignity of—a region that suffered from neo-colonial asymmetries.

Pasolini’s championing of the South is clearly felt in Fulci’s *Don’t Torture a Duckling*. Both Pasolini and Fulci were under the influence of another unorthodox Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, who was a key figure in identifying and rethinking the Southern Question. Gramsci was imprisoned by Mussolini (1926-1937) in Turi, near Bari, in the Southern region of Puglia, where he died at the age of 47. Gramsci was responsible for coining the term “hegemony,” defined as spontaneous consent of the masses to powerful interests, which he sought to contextualize as specific to Western capitalism (1971:12-13). But his critique of Leninism and other types of vanguardism in Marxist thought opened the doors for him to turn towards popular epistemologies and culture, such as the popular religion of peasants. This appreciation of the religion systems of the peasant was met with disdain from mainstream Marxism in Gramsci’s time because religion was perceived as a form of alienation and rendering passive of the subaltern (marginal) classes under the Catholic hegemony. Cultural Studies, especially the more Marxist work of Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall in the UK, were influenced by the pioneering work of Gramsci, especially his championing of popular peasant culture. If Cultural Studies turned the “passive spectator” of Film Studies into “active readers,” it can be said that this develops out of Gramsci’s notion of the organic intellectual, a figure who emerges from within the popular classes, not from outside of it (1971: 12). For Gramsci, all people, including peasants, were philosophers and have “relative autonomy” in relation to dominant hegemony

(1971: 327). The role of the organic intellectual was to bring peasants through their own conceptions of the world into revolutionary praxis. According to Gramsci, the Catholic church operated as a hegemonic power in Italian society, and its priests were quite the opposite of the organic intellectual; they were there to sustain hegemonic interests. In his reflection on the Southern Question, Gramsci writes that in the South the priest appears to the peasant as

(1) bailiff with whom the peasant comes into conflict [...] (2) as a usurer... (3) as a man who is subject to common passions (women and money) and so spirituality inspires no confidence... Confession, therefore has little significance, and the Southern peasant, though often superstitious in a pagan sense, is not priest-ridden (1957, 44).

The relative autonomy of the Southern peasant vis-à-vis the priest speaks directly to the revelation at the end of *Don't Torture a Duckling* that the murderer of children is the young, handsome town priest Don Alberto Avallone, who kills boys because he believes he is saving them from modern (read: Northern) corruption. Don Alberto is not a child-molesting priest, but he is misguidedly concerned in protecting their innocence. His deadly protectionist stance is typical of how power is understood to function in the context of an oppressed place like Accettura, and because of this it would be easy to place the film within discourses of diminished agency for the peoples of Southern Italy as they are seen to be alienated under deadly church power. So alienated, in fact, that a Northern Italian police unit in *Duckling* is sent down to take care of the so-called primitive chaos of this barbaric place. Stephen Thrower asserts that “Fulci was accused of perpetuating a common stereotype of Italian culture, in which the South clings to outmoded attitudes rejected by the modern free-thinking North” (2017: 140). However, attempting to discuss these politics through the positioning of Southern characters who possess “outmoded attitudes” compared to “free-thinking” Northern perspectives sets-up an unproductive binary that may bring one to a dead-end. Don Alberto’s actions may be understood quite differently as a reaction of real terror to the so-called development brought by the North, and as such is an act of resistance, however misguided. To broaden the scope of analysis, I turn to Pasolini’s notion of the “cinema of poetry” as an entry point. Adjusting the angle away from agentic narrative structure and by prioritizing affective attractions via Pasolini can subvert the flat essentialist view that those ‘outmoded attitudes’ in *Duckling* are the product of a primitiveness somehow inherent to the region.

The Cinema of Poetry

In addition to being a filmmaker, poet, and novelist, Pasolini wrote film theory in the area of semiotics. His film theory was deeply influenced by literary theory. And while the corporeal and affective approach I am proposing is outside the realm of semiotics, Pasolini's articulation of a cinema of poetry resonates with the political materiality of Fulci's cinema of attractions. In a 1965 round table discussion at the Pesaro Film Festival, along with Christian Metz, Umberto Eco, and G. D. Volpe, Pasolini attempted to formulate an articulation of cinema as "fundamentally irrational" that was perceived as heretical to the entrenched scientific empiricism of the semiotic school (1985: 185). Among semioticians, Pasolini's theorizing was perceived as naïve and uninspired because of his "unscientific" appeal to the personal realm. Maurizio Viano reveals that Pasolini's ideas had, in the words of Christian Metz, "truly genial intuitions, but [he] did not know how to formulate them in a scientific plane and this has discredited him among semioticians" (1993: 93). Viano writes that Pasolini's appeal to the personal realm, which he mixed with the discursive strategies of semiotics, was perceived as "informed dilettantism" by the dominant semioticians of the 1960s and 1970s (1993: 25). According to Viano, Italian semiotician Emilio Garroni went as far as to accuse Pasolini of "spiritualism—indeed the ultimate sin in those years of enthusiastic faith in a secular and semiotic Enlightenment" (1993: 13-24). While Metz was nonetheless able to attest to the "genial intuitions" that our heretical empiricist conjured up in his theorizing, it was in feminist theory that Pasolini's thinking began to be re-evaluated. Theresa de Lauretis argued that "his insistence on the audiovisuality of cinema [...] bear[s] directly on the role that cinema's imagining has in the reproduction of social reality" (1980: 48).¹⁴ In this sense, cinema is like poetry, as it exceeds its moment of inscription, becoming for Pasolini, in a later essay entitled "The Written Language of Reality," "a dynamics of feelings, affects, passions, ideas" (1988: 204). Pasolini's heretical call for a "fundamentally irrational" theory of cinema—his insistence on the place of emotions, sensations, and the body—clearly announces recent turns toward the corporeal and affect in Cultural Studies. And more importantly, though he never discusses horror, his theorizing obviously addresses corporeal experiences central in the reception of the horror genre.

Pasolini's distinction between a cinema of poetry and a cinema of prose is not a simple division between art house cinema and classical narrative cinema. The cinema of poetry can be found in all of cinema, from classical narrative to avant-garde, art house and *filone*. Influenced by literary theory, the cinema of

poetry for Pasolini can be understood in his notion of “free indirect point-of-view shots,”¹⁵ where filmmakers blend their vision with characters their films, thus challenging strict subjective or objective distinctions. Instead, the spectator is caught in a liminal space that for Pasolini revolves around the irrational or the sacred. *The Gospel According to Matthew* is a case in point: the film opens on a close-up of the face of Mary (Margherita Caruso) as she looks towards an object off screen (Figure 4).



Figure 4: The opening shot of *The Gospel According to Matthew*

Pasolini cuts to a close-up of Joseph (Marcello Morante) looking back at her. Their faces show very little emotion. These are faces of non-actors who are “posing for the camera,” so to speak, in the style of attractions cinema. This is a strategy that Pasolini will return to over and over in his career. And these opening shots are good examples of the “free indirect point-of-view shots” that Pasolini describes as blending his own vision with the characters.¹⁶ The strategy makes the spectator aware that these are non-actors. Pasolini cuts back to the close-up of Mary looking at Joseph and then she looks down with only her eyes. Pasolini returns to a close-up of Joseph and then finally cuts to a long shot of Mary that reveals her pregnancy. In this long shot she is framed by a wall of stones, an allusion to the style of neorealist sacred painting. The reference reveals both her peasant context and her artificiality or materiality as an object of worship. Pasolini’s cinema does not follow the neorealist tradition of documenting reality, however, as he is interested in the sacral elements of life in itself. All life is sacred for Pasolini: it lies in the everydayness of his (non-)actors, in the location in the South of Italy, and in the links he makes to the Catholic painterly tradition depicting Mary. *The Gospel According to Matthew*

operates like so many of his films—particularly *Oedipus Rex* (1967) and *Medea* (1969)—as a series of attractions liked together by the structure of myth and the sacred. If sacredness anchors Pasolini’s understanding of the South, both Italian and global, then in Fulci’s *Duckling*, the tactile, immersive presentation of the *Autostrada*’s imposing reality through his use of zooming in the credit sequence becomes a serpent devouring the notion of Southern sacredness.

Pasolini defines the cinema of poetry specifically in terms of a style where the “felt” camera is projecting the spectator into an experience of the irrational. He writes of

[t]he possibility, in short, of an art prose, of a series of lyrical pages whose subjectivity is ensured by the pretextual use of the ‘free indirect point-of-view shots,’ and whose real protagonist is style. The camera is therefore felt for good reasons. The alteration of lenses, a 25 mm and 200 mm on the same face; the proliferation of wasted zoom shots, with their lenses of very high numbers which are on top of things, expanding them like excessively leavened bread; the continuous, deceptively casual shots against the light, which dazzle the camera; the hand-held camera movements; the more focused tracking shots; the wrong editing for expressive reasons; the irritating opening shots; the interminable pauses on the same image, etc. (1988: 184).

For Pasolini, then, the performative camera serves to highlight the kind of powerful surfaces one finds in the opening of *Duckling*, with its simultaneous zooming, panning, and racking of focus—the performative image and oppositional diegetic/non-diegetic music are part of what makes Fulci’s Southern Italy resonate with its own kind of dark lyrical quality. While Pasolini in the passage just above refers to the cinema of Bernardo Bertolucci, Michelangelo Antonioni, and Jean-Luc Godard, he could also be describing the genre cinema of a Mario Bava, a Sergio Leone, a Dario Argento, or, of course, a Lucio Fulci. Carol Clover has said “that horror movies rub our noses in camerawork,” and indeed, the aesthetics of Italian genre cinema hinge on the notion of baroque excess (1992: 10). The cinema of poetry is not only about foregrounding technique or aesthetics, however. For Pasolini the cinema of poetry enhances the plasticity of the camera as a rupture with narrativity that moves the spectator into the “pretext” (the presymbolic) of the “irrational” “out of a need for an irregular and provocative freedom, out of an otherwise authentic or delicious enjoyment of anarchy” (1988: 184). While Pasolini uses semiotically-inflected language, he could be talking about

attractions cinema. Even more importantly, Pasolini casts his cinema of poetry in provocatively political terms, which speak very clearly to the oeuvre of Lucio Fulci, where “the delicious enjoyment of anarchy” is almost self-evident.

Koven devotes a whole chapter to Pasolini’s cinema of poetry in his book, but his broad birds-eye-view focus on the *giallo* pushes me to advance a more sustained look at the poetics of *giallo* with reference to *Don’t Torture a Duckling*. Koven, a folklorist, does not use the language of cinema of attractions in his work, but he does, indeed, engage the notion of cinematic spectacle. His discussion of the *giallo* more broadly as a cinema of poetry is insightful, indicating stylistic aspects of the *gialli*, such as POV shots, extreme close-ups, fast zooms, false openings, and the avant-garde use of sound and music, as major aspects of the *giallo*’s cinema of poetry. These are aspects that occupy the films of Fulci generally, and as I have mentioned with the credit sequence of *Don’t Torture a Duckling* more particularly. Koven writes that

for Pasolini, when stylistic liberties rupture the narrative prose and we are asked instead to contemplate the formal means of the image’s construction, and when that rupture derives from the character’s subjectivity thereby fusing the character’s subjectivity with the mechanical reproduction of the camera itself, we are invited, if not required, to question the poetics that are presented to us. (2006: 145)

In other words, excessive style creates a spectatorial consciousness that adds to and/or exceeds narrative, speaking to the needs of character content in other ways. Pasolini’s film *The Gospel According to Matthew* is a good example of his theoretical articulation of a cinema of poetry that renders the camera “felt” (1988: 184) in this way. As I mentioned above, the film is shot in the South of Italy, including Matera, the setting for Fulci’s fictional Accendura in *Duckling*. I discuss here a two scenes from the *Gospel* not only to demonstrate the cinema of poetry at work in Pasolini’s own films, but also to show how Pasolini and Fulci (in their own ways) orchestrate a “poetry of attractions.” In Pasolini’s depiction of the adoration of the Magi, the spectator is moved into a state of the “irrational” or “pretext” though his use of “free indirect point-of-view shots” and the juxtaposition of sound/image within his poetry of attractions. The attractions of Pasolini’s cinema center primarily on the human face, specifically the peasant or non-bourgeois face. And often his peasant close-ups are akin to the direct addresses of the cinema of attractions that Tom Gunning discusses in his important work on silent and avant-garde cinema (1989). The most important landscape in Pasolini’s cinema, then, is the landscape of the

face. It is not a coincidence, then, that Pasolini's trip to Israel to scout locations for the film was a disappointment to him, as the face is the location that dominates his own cinema of poetry.¹⁷ Eschewing the framework of classical Hollywood narrative of establishing shots, *The Gospel According to Matthew* opens, as mentioned earlier, with close-ups of the faces of Mary and Joseph. This moment—like Pasolini's films more generally—attempt to capture in his words the “irrational pretext” that prefigures the context of location. The moment speaks to the sensibility of Fulci's work more generally, and particularly in the opening scene of *Duckling*, where camera movement and jump cuts to continued movement, and then disorienting close-ups, disrupt any conventional sense of establishing the broader locality of Accendura.

In *Gospel's* Magi scene, Pasolini uses the zoom lens to accentuate the movement of the men as they come down the hill towards the abode of Mary and Joseph. Pasolini uses free indirect point-of-view shots of the Magi's slow movement down the hill to create a spectatorial experience that heightens the corporeal nature of the encounter. The strategy promotes affect over identification. There are POV shots that seem to be from Mary and Joseph looking up, but that simultaneously enact the POV of Pasolini, whose focus is also on the North/South relations in this scene. The indirect POV shots, the zoom lens from below to accentuate movement, and the static shots of the destination below, reveal the slow, unstoppable force of development, which comes hand-in-hand with violence to the city as Herod is preparing to kill all the firstborn. The terror and tragedy of the event is heightened by Pasolini's use of the Black spiritual “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child” to shock the spectator into what he himself called “a dynamics of feelings, affects, passions, ideas” (1988: 204). I use shock because with the anachronistic music comes a surprising rupture of the place and time of the biblical story. The shocking anachronism pulls the spectator away from context and narrative identification to activate a visceral response to the director's extra-diegetic reading of the moment. Moreover, the spiritual is a melancholic lament that also harnesses affect by contrasting the supposed “good news” of the messiah with the massacre of the innocents that this visit puts into motion. The scene is thus an attractions moment in Pasolini's film that operates the way a song-and-dance number does in a musical: paradoxically apart from, even as it works to augment the film's narrative. The poetry of attractions comes, then, in a spectator who experiences Pasolini's cherished North/South critique not through symbols, themes, or representations, but as “irrational pretext.” The affect here derives from a beyond-ness—a *something*, a meaning or feeling, in

excess of narrative requirements that must be felt through shock and surprise. The scene's politics—where so-called development comes to transform the primitive and pastoral through violence and terror—are enacted through heightened style that overlays the forward-moving narrative events with shocking emotional strains. The torture/kill scene of the witch Maciara in *Duckling* offers a kind of parallel here, showing how Fulci's politics operate within his own poetics of attractions.

Kriss Ravetto-Biagioli notes that “Pasolini did not position himself within Marxist or radical political movements, but pursued an interest in radical otherness” (2014: 95). As Ravetto-Biagioli suggests, Pasolini's radical otherness was operative not in terms of opposition or negativity, as seen in representational or identity politics, but as an encounter “between the senses, embodied perceptions, and material realities that produces a radical (desubjectified) affirmation of life” (2014: 94). Radical otherness for Pasolini was a way to get out from under what he sought to be the greatest problem of the Left: the predicament of always being in opposition. Ravetto-Biagioli argues that Pasolini's cinema of poetry articulates “a series of relations that show how cinema can be a tool for theorizing alternative politics—one that refuses identity politics or the politics of opposition” (2014: 95). If we apply this “alternative politics” to the way Fulci's attractions highlight the tensions and terror of North/South relations in Italy, we can move beyond Austin Fisher's claim, that *gialli* are “indirect political films” (2015: 171). Instead, they are directly political insofar as the political is etched in the film's fleshiness; its affect and corporeality. The *giallo* film does not simply open up a “final ambivalence,” as Koven suggests with respect to a series of films (including *Don't Torture a Duckling*), where the cruelty and violence is reduced to a psychologizing refrain that “we are all guilty of *something*” (2006: 74). Like my *nonno's* use of the term *sto Cristiano*, which was not about re-inscribing Christian bourgeois morality, Fulci's attention to attractions is a form of alternative politics as Pasolini saw it distributed along the registers of radical otherness.

A Poetics of Attractions

The brutal killing of Maciara in *Don't Torture a Duckling* operates in continuity with Pasolini's cinema of poetry and as challenge to the Southern Question. First, it is a self-contained sequence in terms of its place in the narrative, its geographical isolation, and its use of entirely diegetic music. And,

second, it delivers its political thrust through a number of aesthetic choices, among them indirect point-of-view-shots similar to those used by Pasolini in the scene from *Gospel*. Fulci orchestrates the scene around three songs: the English-language “Rhythm,” performed by Riccardo Cocciante, and “Crazy,” performed by Wess & The Airedales, and the Italian-language love song “Quei giorni insieme a te” (“Those Days with You,” composed by Jaja Fiastri and Riz Ortolani), performed by Ornella Vanoni. I use the word “orchestrated” to highlight the centrality of spectacle to the scene, its logic dictated more by immersive and contrasting sound than by the requirements of narrative causality. The scene begins with the same *Autostrada* discussed in the credit sequence, snaking through the countryside in a long shot (See Figure 5), and it ends with Maciara climbing up the embankment to the edge of the same *Autostrada* attempting to alert the oblivious tourists driving by. The *Autostrada* is also where she will finally die, cars whizzing by in a series of inserted, blurred close-ups. Diegetic music frames the scene throughout: from the distant voice of a peasant woman singing in its opening moments (a straightforward stylistic parallel to the credit sequence), to the songs played in the car radio by the three local men who lynch Maciara. The scene is stark and extremely disturbing. It is shot in broad daylight, just off a country road in the grassy, rocky foothills, and the action moves from here to an enclosed cemetery. A sense of entrapment comes as geographic spaces gradually close down on Maciara, underscored by the pervasive car radio. On first viewing, the attack’s brutality and senselessness seem to operate on the level of gritty realism, but on a second viewing, Fulci’s poetic orchestrations become more evident.



Figure 5

Maciara has just been released from prison, having been brought in simply on the grounds that she is an outsider. A team of detectives from the North

have come in to investigate the spate of child murders—“to take care of a situation” that is out of control, believing the local police force to be ill-equipped and unprepared. Maciara subsequently walks through the narrow stone streets of Accettura, a local woman spitting as she passes in a moment that recalls Pasolini’s *Gospel*. Also shot in Matera, Pasolini’s film portrays an innocent person unjustly tried, scourged, and executed by the Romans; thus, this moment in *Duckling* announces Maciara as a kind of Jesus figure, uncomfortably signposting her future lashing. The Jesus story is one of Roman Empire and its pervasive reach through a small group of local elite collaborators, who sought to put down the dangerous Jesus movement in the lynching of its leader. As biblical scholar Richard Horsley asserts, “Roman governors such as Pontius Pilate appointed and deposed the high priests who ruled Judea from their base in the Jerusalem Temple” (Horsley 2003: 15). In *Duckling*, the North/South Italian dynamic is also one of a small group of elite men from the South following the lead of the Northern police commissioner (Virgilio Gazzolo) and embodied in the character of Captain Modesti (Ugo D’Alessio). The story/myth of Jesus itself becomes an additional sort of enclosure in this way, trans-textually recalling Pasolini’s use of Matera for his Jesus story. Fascinated by myth, Pasolini saw the everyday as sacred in the preindustrial world of Southern Italy and the global South. In this context it is possible to read the lynching of the witch Maciara for murders she did not commit, as the South, too, being lynched, especially as two of the three local men who punish and kill her do so by first blasting Western-influenced pop songs—a clear presence of Empire—blaring from their car. Unlike Pasolini’s romantic view of the South, Fulci’s pessimistic view understands the South as a kind of enclosure within false paradigms of Northern progress. The romantic Pasolinian view of the unspoiled South has already been spoiled in Fulci’s film by the priest’s act of killing children to save their innocence. In the scene of Maciara’s eventual torture, the long shot of the *Autostrada* slithering through the countryside is—like its presence in the opening scene—an additional suggestion of something rotten, sinister. Accordingly, the car and the music it brings function as evidence of invasion and oppression. Ant-like in the title sequence, the car is now suggestive of a much closer threat, bringing with it a sickness in the gut for the spectator.

Every element of the scene in question suggests a South literally ripped open by Northern attitudes. Just before Maciara retreats through the fence in the cemetery to evade the approaching men, hand-held POV shots and “indirect point-of-view shots” from her perspective combine with reorienting and often disorienting zooms to increase Maciara’s (and the spectator’s)

experience of enclosure and claustrophobia in the scene. Maciara enters the scene mounting the ridge of a hill, framed widely. A quick zoom-in reframes her more tightly, narrowing the field around her. The sound of a car door being shut alerts Maciara and the spectator to the presence of the men. As Fulci cuts to a POV shot, the hand-held camera conveys her vulnerability. An indirect POV shot follows, framing the back of Maciara's head to put the spectator in close proximity to her, while keeping her pursuers clearly in the distance as they approach her. The framing in 2:35:1 accentuates the claustrophobic nature of the scene by keeping Maciara and all of her pursuers simultaneously within view. The hand-held panning to the position of each man suggests the shifting glance of Maciara as she tries to survey the threat to her. It therefore registers insecurity without having to show her face. The technique is a powerful exploitation of the potential of widescreen framing¹⁸ to evoke dread by immersing the spectator.¹⁹ The wide frame is tight on Maciara's head and shoulders as she enters the cemetery, affecting as much calm as she can in what is essentially a retreat to safer space. When one of the men suddenly crushes her hand in the heavy metal gate, the scene shifts from its primary focus on collapsing aural and spatial geometry to an emphasis on the haptic—ruptured textures and surfaces (Figure 6).



Figure 6

Maciara screams loudly. Fulci cuts to a zoom on her face and a close-up of her hand as she pulls out her bloodied knuckles. The music changes suddenly to the late 1960s soul song “Crazy” by Wess & The Airedales. Again, it is not only the fence which creates enclosure as Maciara is pursued into the cemetery, but the aural disjunction created by joining the clashing threat of the song: “I’ve seen a lot of women, but I never seen a girl like you. You got me going outta my head with the things I never thought I’d do.” Not only is the

song change jolting, but the volume at which the spectator hears it is elevated—no longer quite as realistically echoing from the car some twenty meters away, but now scoring the scene with a greater urgency. The threat of violence now fully apparent, Maciara backs into the cemetery, away from her pursuers, who carry objects that suggest the torture and mortification of the flesh: chains and a large tree branch.

As the three torturers move in on Maciara, Fulci creates a sense of spectatorial immersion by shifting the framing from wide shots of the cemetery, to hand-held indirect point-of view shots of pursuers and pursued sharing the frame, to traditional POV shots, particularly of the men's faces in close-up, that bring the spectator into close proximity with Maciara's vulnerability. The lyrics of "Crazy" spell out the situation, continuing the promise of threat: "I've seen a lot of bad things. Things that make me mad!" But it is the first blow by the man holding the chain that shocks. The hand-held camera in this shot first frames Maciara and the man holding the chain, then shifts into an indirect point-of-view shot as he raises his arm to strike, and finally dips low to the ground to emphasize the brute power he wields. In an "indirect point-of-view shot" tightly focused on her, Maciara screams and falls to the ground revealing the splayed flesh and bloody marks of the chain on the neck and chest area. The scene continues with a straight POV shot from the ground as another towering assailant administers a second blow to the midriff, and then Fulci cuts to a close-up of the wound releasing a viscous flow of blood. Maciara gets up and tries to get away and the music shifts again. This time to the contemporary love song sung by Ornella Vanoni.

Every musical break is announced by the radio disc jockey, here noting "a change of mood now" in "the lovely voice of Ornella Vanoni." The disc jockey's call, "Ornella, take it away!" almost mocks the hopelessness of the moment for Maciara. The men continue to beat her with fist and chain, continually opening up her flesh across cheek and arm in long, red slashes that expose the pink, vulnerable flesh beneath. Fulci lingers on the bloody detail of the landscape of Maciara's body torn open. A close-up frames Maciara's face against the stark, white concrete surface of a mausoleum, now spattered with her blood. Maciara slides down the wall to the ground, seemingly passed out, and Fulci cuts to a long shot showing the three men file out along the cemetery's dirt path. Significant in this shot is the statue of an angel, quietly overturned in the cemetery (Figure 7, next page).



Figure 7

Maciara drags herself along the ground, and Fulci cuts to a blurred POV shot of her view of the men's feet leaving the gates. As she gropes and stumbles her way out of the cemetery, Fulci intercuts shots of Maciara with blurred POV shots, and wild hand-held close-ups of the blurred ironwork of the gates. In Italian, Vanoni's love song intones: "I'm a bit ashamed to have told you yes. Today I have more dignity. I would not accept love in crumbs that you gave to me as if it were charity." Just as Maciara reaches and opens the gate, Fulci startles with a shock cut of a truck passing on the *Autostrada*.

The jolting sensation of cars passing close to the camera, along with a slow zoom-in, suggest that the camera is positioned on the other side of the smooth tarmac of the *Autostrada*, looking across to another part of the highway that can be seen curving out in the distance. The thick concrete pillars recall the opening scene's abstractions of concrete and towering blades of grass. The zoom is shocking and disorienting as the camera moves right to left with the traffic in proximate distance but against the traffic in the far distance. And again, as in the opening shot, Fulci's zoom rests on a stone in the foreground. A bloodied, flayed hand appears and slowly manages to grip the rock as Maciara attempts to climb up the embankment, from the jagged rocks onto the relative smoothness of the *Autostrada*. Fulci uses POV shots of tourists, ostensibly on their way to the beautiful beaches of the South, staring at her from the safe distance of their cars, and then ignoring her, driving by without stopping. The scene is an explosion of haptic dread, a series of contrasting surfaces: the smooth tarmac, the ripped skin on Maciara's face and hand, the brutal concrete of the *Autostrada*, and the blood-streaked, jagged rock that isolates Maciara's tortured form within the terrifying enclosure (auditory and spatial) of the frame (Figure 8, next page). The material shock of her flesh ripped open in furling rows parallels the brutal swathe cut through

the Southern Italian landscape by the *Autostrada*; the pristine nature of the South torn by colonial Northern development is given sensual, material form in her tortured face and hand (Figure 9).



Figures 8 (above) and 9 (below)

Conclusion

It is not hyperbole to describe Fulci as the *maestro* of attractions horror. It is often said that his films lack a proper narrative focus, but to shift one's focus on attractions is to enter into the world he knew best. He has directed almost every kind of animal attack in his films, from bats in *A Lizard in a Woman's Skin* (1971) (another evocative, tactile title), to spiders in *The Beyond* (1981), to even snails in *Aenigma* (1987). But it is the extended gory set-pieces that have made him famous, such as the infamous extreme close-up of a wood splinter entering the eye of Mrs. Menard (Olga Karlatos) in *Zombie*. In 1935 Walter Benjamin famously argued that experience of cinema takes on the contours of tactile shock for the distracted reception of mass culture as he

argues for a shift from the visual absorption of aura in the bourgeois art experience (2004). In other words, Benjamin shifts reception toward the so-called lower senses often not associated with the cinema experience (2004). Laura Marks reminds us that haptic visuality “tends to move over the surface of its object rather than plunge into illusionistic depth, not to distinguish form so much as to discern texture” (2000: 162). Moreover, Marks added the “r” in gaze, to suggest that haptic visuality makes the spectator “more inclined to graze than to gaze” (2000: 162). In *Duckling*, the ‘grazing’ over ‘gazing’ appears in so many of Fulci’s stylistic choices: the simultaneous pans and zooms; the alternation between straightforward POV shots with indirect point-of-view shots; and the many visual abstractions, from the smooth, heavy concrete of the *Autostrada* laying open the Southern landscape, to the scratching away of earth to reveal of a dead infant, to the eventual flaying open of Maciara’s flesh. The opening scene does not simply foreshadow Marcia’s death at the hands of local vigilante, it announces the film’s political positioning against the exigencies of so-called modernization in its very surfaces. The later torturing of Maciara is also no mere gazing at the female body being victimized by alienated Southern men. It is an example of how Fulci uses his poetry of attractions to shock his audiences into political readings of the Southern Question. Here, land and flesh are laid open disturbingly. Not surprisingly, the Marxist Italian newspaper *L’Unità*²⁰ called Fulci’s portrayal of the South as “lurid,” characterized by “irritating over-simplified attitudes towards the villagers [...] and [having] no trace of any socio-ideological analysis” (Thrower 2017: 140). Yet even through his relative disdain, the critic is compelled to focus specifically on Maciara’s lynching—a testament to the political power of the scene, specifically, and to Fulci’s poetry of attractions more generally. “Accendura,” the critic writes, “where the witch accused of having killed three young boys with her black magic spells and the smooth tarmac of the motorways on which new cars travel indifferently, this image on its own cannot make a movie” (Thrower, 140). As I have already argued, it certainly *can*. In Fulci’s poetics of attractions, an image—and everything that goes into making it sing with sensorial and political resonance—does in fact make a movie. The concrete invasiveness of the *Autostrada*’s tarmac and columns cutting across the Southern hills—and the sight of Maciara’s flayed flesh and suffering face as the highway passes her by unseen—are precisely the places where the Southern Question finds its visceral power in *Don’t Torture a Duckling*.

This sun-drenched lynching of Maciara is not the iconic cemetery horror attractions with which Fulci is associated, and that he will later construct in a

film like *City of the Living Dead* (*Paura nella città dei morti viventi*, 1980); it is instead part of the attractions of a *Mezzogiorno giallo* that is constructed around the division between the North and South. This division is felt corporally in the way the chain a man uses to whip Maciara violently rips through her flesh, or the crushing of her hand by the gate of the cemetery, one of the many enclosures collapsing around Maciara—space, framing, pop music. This shrinking space how the division of Northern hegemony is felt over Southern lives. The local men are participants in this colonial asymmetry, not simply as alienated men who reproduce stereotypes of the South, but as the bearers of a culture of death who not only perpetrate their crime in a Catholic cemetery, but who embody the crimes of a Catholic priest who seeks to protect the innocence of young children. It is this paternalism that kills in the film—a paternalism evoking Northern views of the underdeveloped and ‘childlike’ South, who need the central bureau in Rome to come investigate—as if this act might somehow bring the so-called primitives into the present. This paternalism is deadly in *Don’t Torture a Duckling*; it is the same paternalism that views Southerners like my *nonno* as “*terrone*.” It slices through the flesh of Maciara, who in many ways embodies its *potential* more than its primitiveness. Like Pasolini’s search for radical otherness in his own treatment of the political, Fulci also attempts to negotiate a politics of North/South relations in the terms of attractions cinema. This is a cinema that is affectively visceral and where the politics are felt corporally, in the guts of the viewer. In this way, *Duckling*’s pageantry around the death of Maciara is not simply an attempt to advance positive representations of the South, but in the terms of Pasolini’s cinema of poetry, is an attempt to make *sensual* sense of North/South asymmetries through shock. Radical otherness is here embodied in the terrible violent death of an innocent outsider whose enclosure cannot be liberated by development. In the traditions of the horror genre, this kind of visceral realization of radical otherness comes often in bleak and pessimistic endings, but *Don’t Torture a Duckling* assails the spectator with this terrible realization halfway through the film. Like the shower scene in Alfred Hitchcock’s *Psycho*,²¹ where the music underscores the cut flesh of Marion Crane (Janet Leigh), *Duckling*’s spectator affectively experiences the traps and enclosures of nation and region as a visceral and corporeal materiality. To paraphrase the critic at *L’Unità* discussed above, *Don’t Torture a Duckling*, like *Psycho*, reminds us that in attractions cinema, the scene *does indeed* make the movie.

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Notes

¹ I use the word *Autostrada* in Italian itself because the word is implicated in the construction of the South as other in Italy.

² It began with the bombing of Piazza Fontana in Milano, by a fascist paramilitary group Ordina Nuova, killing 16 and injuring 90, and culminated in the assassination of ex-Prime Minister and Christian Democrat Aldo Moro in 1978, by a left insurgency group, le Brigate Rosse.

³ Because the *giallo* is often associated with the pulpy American detective novel (itself evocative of a distinct era and state of mind in America), the term *filone* (vein or stream), challenges liberal notions that equate high art with originality and low art with mimicry. Linking a work to national literary traditions is one way of defending its “high art” status. For example, David Pirie in the context of 1970s, a time when the horror genre was only starting to be taken seriously in scholarship, elevated Hammer studios cycle of films by positioning them in the British literary tradition (a tradition that was ironically in its own context also perceived as low form of art). In this sense, the *giallo* is sometimes reduced to being an American derivative. The company Mondadori, first began publishing the *gialli economici* (pulp thrillers) in the yellow books jackets in 1929, from which the *giallo* takes its name, began by translating into Italian Agatha Christie, John Dickinson Carr, and Raymond Chandler.

⁴ See Adam Lowenstein’s article, “The Giallo/Slasher Landscape: *Ecologia del delitto, Friday the 13th* and Subtractive Spectatorship,” *Italian Horror Cinema* (2016) for a politicized discussion of spectacle horror in ways that resonate with my analysis of Fulci poetics of attraction.

⁵ See Austin Fisher’s important study of the spaghetti western for examples of *filone* filmmakers championing the South in *Radical Frontiers in the Spaghetti Western: Politics, Violence and Popular Italian Cinema* (2011).

⁶ Mendik writes that “the rustic rural sphere is even more pronounced in those *Mezzogiorno gialli* which are located centrally in the South [...]. Key titles include Lucio Fulci’s *Non si sevizia un paperino, Don’t Torture a Duckling*, 1972) as well as Pupi Avati’s *La casa dalle finestre che ridono* (*The House with Laughing Windows*, 1976)” (2014, 398).

⁷ See “Mondo Realism, the Sensual Body, and Genre Hybridity in Joe D’Amato’s ‘Emanuelle’ Films,” in *Intensities: The Journal of Cult Media*

⁸ Some films before 1972 include Mario Volpe’s *Le due sorelle* (1950), Alberto Lattuada’s *La lupa* (1953), Roberto Rossellini’s *Garibaldi* (1961), Luigi Zampa’s *Roaring Years* (1962), Brunello Rondi’s *Il demonio* (1963), Nanni Loy’s *Made in Italy* (1965), and Francesco Rosi’s *More Than a Miracle* (1967).

⁹ Not to be mistaken for the Jewish Italian author and chemist Primo Levi (1919-1987). The novel was made into a movie by Francesco Rosi (1979).

¹⁰ It is not an accident that the Western was an important *filone* in Italy as the genre functions around the Italian South as a frontier region. And not coincidentally, my *nonno* also loved to watch Westerns.

¹¹ A typical Fulci moment of attractions, such as the shark-zombie underwater attack-fight in *Zombie*, is indebted to the spectacular exhibitionist Mondo films. In fact, *Mondo Pazzo* (Gualtiero Jacopetti, and Franco Prosperi, 1963) features a scene where a swimmer does actually fight with shark in a pool at Marine Land, Honolulu, in the USA.

¹² *The Gospel According to Matthew* is dedicated to Pope John XXIII as he was instigator of the important Vatican II reforms. He died the year the film was released in 1963.

¹³ *The Decameron* (1971), *The Canterbury Tales* (1972), *A Thousand and One Nights* (1974).

¹⁴ This reappraisal of Pasolini was later taken up again later by Naomi Greene, dedicating an entire chapter of her book, *Pier Paolo Pasolini: Cinema as Heresy* (1990), to defending Pasolini's ideas against his semiotic rivals. Also see, Giuliana Bruno's "Heresies: The Body of Pasolini's Semiotics: (1991). These debates are not important to this examination of Fulci as Pasolini never constructed a theoretical system, but engaged theory as a form of praxis.

¹⁵ Coming from narrative theory, "free indirect discourse" or "free indirect speech" is a kind of way that the prose can speak in the voice of the character, without the character actually speaking. The theory in narrative comes from studies of Modernist literature that relies heavily on slippages into and out of character consciousness. Jane Austen is cited as one of those who used it consistently, and James Joyce is a Modernist example. See Stevenson: 1992.

¹⁶ See Gilles Deleuze's *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* where he discusses Pasolini's cinema of poetry to challenge the subjective/objective shot dichotomy (pp. 71-76).

¹⁷ He made a documentary about scouting locations entitled *Sopralluoghi in Palestina per il vangelo secondo Matteo* (*Location Scouting in Palestine for the Gospel According to Matthew*) (1965).

¹⁸ Fulci's poetics of attractions is indeed driven more generally by his masterful use of the widescreen format. Fulci's dreadfully tactile *Zombie* is a case in point, where not only are eyes under attack in the film, but a powerful usage wide frame immersiveness creates the experience of visceral abjection that has the quality of odor and stench like no other film.

¹⁹ John Carpenter will use the same technique to great effect six years later with his *Halloween* (1978), as the shape of Michael Myers pervades the edges of the screen making him paradoxically both absent and present.

²⁰ *L'Unità* was founded by Antonio Gramsci in 1924 and was the official newspaper of Italian Communist Party. It ceased publishing in 2017.

²¹ Again, as I mentioned earlier *Psycho* is an important influence in the *giallo* more broadly.

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