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# Looking for New Aesthetic Models through Italian-Yugoslavian Film Co-Productions: Lowbrow Neorealism in *Sand, Love and Salt*

This essay outlines some key issues regarding the post-WWII co-productions of Yugoslavia and Italy. In particular, it emphasizes the role that such ventures played in introducing new aesthetics into 1950s Yugoslav cinema, through the incorporation of features of Italian neorealist comedies and melodramas. I argue that, because many of these projects were Italian runaway productions, they enabled the Yugoslav film industry to acquire professional know-how, and, above all else, helped Yugoslav cinema to develop new styles and genres. In the case of neorealist melodramas, this process was made possible by the complex nature of neorealism itself, inasmuch as this was a broad cinematic phenomenon that consisted not only of the small number of films that are included in the neorealist canon, but also of popular genre films. Italian popular cinema was highly exportable in the late 1950s, most notably to countries that already possessed an interest in this nation's popular culture, including West Germany and the Yugoslav Federation. Accordingly, a productive case study is provided by *SAND, LOVE AND SALT* (Harte Männer, Weiße Liebe, František Čáp, 1957), a German-Italian-Yugoslav co-production featuring international film stars that was modeled on neorealist melodramas and comedies, and helmed by a Czech director who worked in Yugoslav popular cinema.

## Co-productions between Yugoslavia and Western European Countries

The Yugoslav film industry emerged shortly after World War II. In 1946, the three major production companies in the Yugoslav Federation — Croatian Jadran Film, Slovenian Triglav Film, and Serbian Avala Film — were founded by the Yugoslav government using public money. These were soon followed in 1947 by Bosna Film in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Vardar Film in Macedonia, and finally in 1948 by Lovćen film in Montenegro.<sup>1)</sup> The new

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1) See Daniel J. Goulding, *Liberated Cinema: The Yugoslav Experience* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), p. 4.

Yugoslav film industry was, however, lacking in both technical know-how and a distinct aesthetic regime; the few Yugoslavian films that were made in the pre-war period had failed to establish a national tradition. Co-productions therefore played a major role in the growth of Yugoslav cinema inasmuch as they provided an opportunity to gain know-how by working alongside foreign partners from an established film industry. From the mid 1950s, Yugoslavia had started to attract West German, Austrian, French, and Italian producers, on account of its cheap labor, its well-equipped facilities and, most important of all, its vast, barren landscapes that could be used for location shooting. The Austrian film industry inaugurated the era of the Yugoslav co-production with the Maria Schell vehicle *THE LAST BRIDGE* (*Die Letzte Brücke*, 1954), which was helmed by the German director Helmut Käutner. Soon after, Italian and French producers started to use Serbia as a location for nineteenth-century Russian swashbucklers such as *MICHAEL STROGOFF* (Michel Strogoff; Carmine Gallone, 1956) and *TEMPEST* (*La tempesta*; Alberto Lattuada, 1958). Finally, in the early 1960s, West German producers shot Karl May Westerns on location in Croatia, while East German DEFA made its *Indianerfilme* there as well.

Strictly speaking, the overwhelming majority of the near two hundred Yugoslavian films made from the 1940s to the 1980s were runaway productions rather than co-productions. Yugoslav film crews contributed little to such films, which mainly employed western European screenwriters, directors, and stars. In fact, Yugoslav producers appear to have been primarily motivated by the acquisition of precious foreign currency that could be used to ease the burden of the nation's debts, and by securing the domestic distribution rights to these runaway productions.

### Yugoslavian-Italian co-productions

Co-productions between Italian and Yugoslav film companies started to take place after the 1954 'London Memorandum', whereby the British government temporarily calmed a military crisis between Italy and Yugoslavia over the partition of the Free Territory of Trieste. The lowering of tension between these two countries came at just the right moment for both of their national film industries. As Daniel J. Gouling suggests, '1954 marked the first year that Yugoslavia entered into coequal financial and artistic feature film production with foreign studios.'<sup>2)</sup> Co-productions between Italy and Yugoslavia started a few years before bilateral agreements were signed by the two countries. Italian producers were therefore only able to work with Yugoslav companies in tripartite co-productions involving nations that had already arranged co-production agreements with the Yugoslav Federation. However, in December 1957, the Italian and the Yugoslav Producers Associations finally signed a bilateral agreement,<sup>3)</sup> thereby initiating a cooperation that would remain fruitful across the 1960s and the 1970s, before ebbing markedly in the

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2) Gouling, *Liberated Cinema*, p. 37.

3) The agreements, which were written in the French language, were later ratified by the Italian parliament as the 'Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica', nr. 463, 05/03/1958. See *Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana*, no. 112, 9 May, 1958, p. 2071–2073.

1980s. As was the case with most Yugoslav co-productions, for over a decade, the number of Italian runaway productions exceeded that of co-productions between the two countries, and it was not until 1969 that Italy acted as a minority co-producer on a Yugoslav majority co-production.<sup>4)</sup> For this reason, co-productions were often seen as controversial by both parties: Yugoslav film critics resented the fact that their cinematic infrastructure was being used by foreign film companies to make cheap entertainment,<sup>5)</sup> while some sectors of the Italian public were concerned about the impact these ventures would have on the Italian labor market. For example, in 1959, in order to protect the interests of Italian domestic workers and facilities, Italy's extreme right-wing opposition called for a bill to cease the shooting of Italian films in Yugoslavia.<sup>6)</sup>

From this perspective, both Yugoslav producers and their western European partners certainly considered the co-productions in economic terms; however, I maintain that these ventures also had a strong cultural value as far as the negotiation of foreign aesthetics and industrial models was concerned. Thus, the first feature film made in Yugoslavia, *IN THE MOUNTAINS OF YUGOSLAVIA* (V gorakh Yugoslavii, 1946), was a fully Russian production that used local cast and crew. Yet, this film also enabled Soviet social-realist aesthetics to percolate into the nascent Yugoslav film industry as, according to Peter Volk, "nearly all future Yugoslav film directors passed through [Room's] team".<sup>7)</sup> For instance, the male lead, General Draža Mihailović (Vijekoslav Afrić), directed the first Yugoslav feature, *SLAVICA* (1947), which provided a blueprint for nation's partisan-war genre.<sup>8)</sup>

Nevertheless, Yugoslav directors would soon be forced to look elsewhere for new aesthetic models. After the Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito broke from the USSR in 1948, Soviet socialist realism ceased to be seen by the nation's filmmakers as a politically viable option. According to Jurica Pavičić, in the 1950s, Yugoslav directors were presented with three alternatives. The first model was "the safest and the most academic": adapting literary classics. The second was somewhat riskier: adopting models of progressive cinemas such as Italian neorealism or Mexican melodrama. Finally, the third solution was to negotiate Hollywood models; according to Jurica Pavičić, this was the most successful and prolific choice. However, I would like to suggest that, from a transnational perspective, the adoption of neorealism might have been the most successful approach as it allowed Yugoslav film companies to secure foreign partners and to break into international markets, albeit for a short time. As such, certain Italian-Yugoslav film co-productions can be seen as experiments in introducing foreign style and imagery into an emergent film industry.

4) *THE BATTLE OF NERETVA* (Bitka na Neretvi, Veljko Bulajić).

5) See Francesca Rolandi, 'L'immagine dell'Italia in Serbia (1950–1965). Dalla questione di Trieste alla cultura di massa', *Diacronie. Studi di storia contemporanea*, no. 5 (2011), pp. 1–16. <[http://www.studistorici.com/2011/01/29/rolandi\\_numero\\_5/](http://www.studistorici.com/2011/01/29/rolandi_numero_5/)> [accessed 10 May 2013].

6) 'Atti parlamentari, Camera dei Deputati, Legislatura III, Documenti, Disegni di legge e relazioni, Sessione 1593', 30 September 1959 (<[http://www.camera.it/\\_dati/leg03/lavori/stampati/pdf/15930001.pdf](http://www.camera.it/_dati/leg03/lavori/stampati/pdf/15930001.pdf)> [accessed 10 May 2013]).

7) Petar Volk, *Istorija jugoslovenskog filma* (Beograd: Institut za film, 1986), p. 548.

8) For the founding role of Slavica in constructing a new national landscape for the new Yugoslav Federation, see Rosalind Galt, *The New European Cinema: Redrawing the Map* (New York NY: Columbia University Press, 2006), pp.163–170.

9) Jurica Pavičić, "Lemons in Siberia": A New Approach to the Study of the Yugoslav Cinema of the 1950s, *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1 (2008), p. 24.

The first sign of the Yugoslav film industry's growing interest in neorealism came in the second half of the 1950s, with the production of *VALLEY OF PEACE* (Dolina Miru, 1956). This film starred the American-born actor John Kitzmiller, a former US soldier who having been stationed in Italy moved into acting shortly after WWII. The adoption of themes and character-types from neorealism, as well as the inter-textual citation of Kitzmiller's appearance in the neorealist comedy *TO LIVE IN PEACE* (Vivere in pace, 1947), helped *VALLEY OF PEACE* to become the Yugoslav film industry's first international hit.<sup>10)</sup>

The early career of the Montenegrin-born director Veljko Bulajić also offers a useful example of the relationships that existed in the late 1950s between the Yugoslav film industry and neorealism. First, in 1955 Bulajic was granted a government bursary to study directing at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia in Rome, where he was trained by the famous neorealist screenwriter Cesare Zavattini.<sup>11)</sup> Moreover, in 1958, Bulajic worked as an assistant director on the set of *THE YEAR LONG ROAD* (Cesta duga godinu dana), a Croatian production that was directed by neorealist filmmaker Giuseppe De Santis, written by Italian screenwriters (Gianni Puccini, Tonino Guerra and Elio Petri, among others), and headlined by the Italian stars Massimo Girotti, Eleonora Rossi Drago, and Silvana Pampanini. In 1959, Bulajić directed his first feature film, *TRAIN WITHOUT A TIMETABLE* (Vlak bez voznog reda), the critical and commercial success of which established him as one of the most important Yugoslav directors of the early 1960s. *TRAIN WITHOUT A TIMETABLE* was a product of Bulajić's Italian training, blending a neorealist style with nods to the Hollywood Western:<sup>12)</sup> a model that had been used since the late 1940s by a number of Italian directors, most notably by Giuseppe De Santis, but also by Alberto Lattuada and Pietro Germi. Finally, and most importantly, Bulajić's second film, *ATOMIC WAR BRIDE* (Rat, 1960), was based on an original screenplay written by his former teacher Cesare Zavattini. A surrealistic anti-war apologue that shares numerous similarities with Vittorio De Sica's and Cesare Zavattini's *MIRACLE IN MILAN* (Miracolo a Milano, 1951), *ATOMIC WAR BRIDE* concerns a couple, John (Antun Vrodljak) and Maria (Ewa Krzyzewska), who are separated on their wedding day by the outbreak of a nuclear war between two unnamed European countries. Several sequences from *ATOMIC WAR BRIDE* were conceived as homages to neorealist films. For example, when John is drafted into the army and loaded onto a van on his wedding day, we are presented with a point-of-view shot of him staring at his wife, who is running towards him, desperately crying out his name: the tracking shot used here explicitly references that used for Anna Magnani's death scene in *ROME, OPEN CITY* (Roma città aperta, 1945). Moreover, the next sequence is introduced by another tracking shot, this time showing the ruins of a bombed city; it is clearly designed to invoke similar shots that were used in the opening sequences of various neorealist films including *GERMANY YEAR ZERO* (Germania anno zero, 1948).

Despite the poor reception that it received in both the Italian and the Yugoslav press, *ATOMIC WAR BRIDE* is an interesting experiment that can be viewed as a product of the

10) See Dejan Kosanović, Dinko Tucaković, *Stranci u raju* (Beograd: Stubovi Kulture, 1998), p. 117.

11) Goulding, *Liberated Cinema*, p. 57.

12) As Pavičić points out, "[i]n his first film [Bulajić] skillfully put to use some neorealist techniques: the mass protagonist, non-professional actors, the use of dialect and local color. But, at the same time, *TRAIN WITHOUT A TIMETABLE* is strongly influenced by the epic migration westerns". Pavičić, 'Lemons in Siberia', p. 31.

condescending and quasi-colonial attitude that some Italian intellectuals showed toward the Yugoslav film industry. In this respect, the 1957 meeting between the respective Cultural Committees of the Italian Communist Party and the Yugoslav Federation can be taken as an example of just such a policy. Speaking at the meeting, Mario Alicata, a former screenwriter and film critic, and the president of the Italian Communist Party's Cultural Committee, called for co-operation between the two countries' film industries, wherein Yugoslav creative personnel would have next to no input compared to their Italian counterparts. In fact, in Alicata's proposal, Italian neorealist directors, screenwriters, and actors would have worked on a series of Italian and Yugoslavian co-productions that would have been shot with Yugoslav film crews — all in the name of the betterment of Yugoslav film culture.<sup>13</sup> His proposal reveals the colonial attitude of the Italian left-wing: even though it was not as a direct consequence of the 1957 meeting, Italian involvement in both *THE YEAR LONG ROAD* and *ATOMIC WAR BRIDE* can be reconsidered from this perspective.

Finally, it needs stressing that neorealism was also a lingering presence in some of the most influential Yugoslav film magazines. For instance, the Croatian *Filmska Kultura* featured a lengthy analysis of *BICYCLE THIEVES* (*Ladri di biciclette*, 1948) in its first issue in 1957, and the third issue of this magazine included a detailed discussion of neorealist cinema.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, in the following years, *Filmska Kultura*'s editors frequently published translated versions of the theoretical studies of the leading post-neorealist Italian film critic Guido Aristarco.

### Neorealism, yes: but which neorealism?

The remarkable levels of interest that Yugoslav directors and film critics showed in neorealist cinema came a little late for Italian neorealism itself. This movement had run its course long before 1954. By this time, Visconti's *THE WANTON COUNTESS* (*Senso* 1954) had, according to film theoretician Guido Aristarco, marked a shift from neorealism to a more complex form of critical realism, similar to the accomplishments that György Lukács saw in the nineteenth-century novels of Balzac and Tolstoj.<sup>15</sup> In fact, instead of just picturing contemporary Italy, as the neorealist filmmakers had done, this film offered an interpretation of Italian history through the perspective of the class conflicts that had shaped the nation's past. Rossellini, on the other hand, had concluded his series of films starring Ingrid Bergman, and was entering into a long period of inactivity, before eventually moving to India. Finally, with *LA STRADA* (1954) and *IL GRIDO* (1957) respectively, Fellini and Antonioni were gradually taking the neorealist legacy into brave new territory of modern cinema by emphasizing subjectivity and through radically loosened narration.

13) See Francesca Rolandi, 'Con ventiquattromila baci: l'influenza della cultura di massa italiana in Jugoslavia (1955–1965)' (PhD dissertation: University of Turin, 2012).

14) Velimir Stojanović, 'O neorealizmu. Razmišljanja filmskog redatelja', *Filmska Kultura*, no. 3 (1957), pp. 51–54.

15) See Guido Aristarco, 'È realismo', *Cinema Nuovo*, vol. 4, no. 55 (1955), pp. 226–228. Aristarco was basing his assumptions on György Lukács, *Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels als Literaturhistoriker* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1947), which had recently been translated in Italian as *Il marxismo e la critica letteraria* (Torino: Einaudi, 1953).

These developments left only De Sica, De Santis, and Zavattini in a field that others had eagerly abandoned. Yet, even though what could be defined as “highbrow” neorealism — which is to say the neorealist canon comprising lauded films made by recognized auteurs — was dying out, neorealist aesthetics survived in the form of a “low-brow” popular cinema that had been inspired by the movement. This distinction is contested, as neorealism had always had a complex relationship with popular cinema, with, for example, directors such as De Santis, Germi, and Lattuada having often worked in the space between the “‘highs’ of linguistic experimentation, and the ‘lows’ of popular film production”.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, I would like to suggest that a distinction “between films that have the ambition to be part of neorealism and recur to genre formulas, from genre films that include neorealist elements”,<sup>17</sup> does reflect a general attitude that informed both the Italian film critics of the 1950s — who were intent on distinguishing ‘real’ neorealism from what they thought of as its sentimental, melodramatic or comedic descent into the mainstream — and some major Italian producers, such as Lux Film, Ponti & De Laurentiis, Rizzoli, and Titanus, which, in the early 1950s, were moving toward a more profitable, audience-friendly version of neorealism. Furthermore, such a distinction is also discussed by the few Italian scholars who, since the 1970s, have approached neorealism from new theoretical perspectives. Thus, in the opening proceedings of a celebrated conference on neorealism, Lino Micciché questioned the inclusion in the neorealist canon of many of the films directed by Alberto Lattuada, by Renato Castellani, and by Pietro Germi, on the grounds that they had been compromised by mainstream spectacle, and therefore lacked the ‘ethics of aesthetics’, which he posited as the defining feature of the masterpieces of Visconti, Rossellini, De Sica, and De Santis.<sup>18</sup> According to Alberto Farassino, Italian neorealism was less a movement than a “universe”, the characteristics of which had indeed crystallized in the films of De Sica, Rossellini, De Santis or Visconti, but which also surfaced in popular films such as Raffaello Matarazzo’s melodramas and “pink neorealism”,<sup>19</sup> a group of 1950s Italian comedies that purportedly used neorealist convention as a source of entertainment, thereby marking a significant shift toward the return to popular cinema and to the intensified contamination of neorealism with ‘film genres and more traditional modes of production’.<sup>20</sup> The neorealist elements that appear in these films range from the casting of non-professional actors alongside established stars, to the widespread use of location shooting, and to content-specific elements such as setting them in the poorer parts of the Italian countryside or in petit bourgeois urbanity, and episodic plots. What sets them apart from highbrow neorealism is their mobilization of genre frameworks, such as melodrama or come-

16) Francesco Pitassio and Paolo Noto, *Il cinema neorealista* (Bologna: Archetipolibri, 2010, p. 37). Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.

17) Alberto Farassino, ‘Margini, attraversamenti, contaminazioni’, in Callisto Cosulich (ed.), *Storia del cinema italiano. Vol. VII. 1945–1948* (Venezia-Roma: Marsilio-Bianco & Nero, 2003), p. 171.

18) Lino Micciché, ‘Per una verifica del neorealismo’, in Lino Micciché (ed.), *Il neorealismo cinematografico italiano* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1978).

19) See Alberto Farassino, ‘Neorealismo, storia e geografia’, in *Neorealismo: cinema italiano 1945–1949* (Turin: E.D.T., 1989).

20) Alberto Farassino, ‘Viraggi del neorealismo. Rosa e altri colori’, in Luciano De Giusti (ed.), *Storia del cinema italiano. Vol. VIII. 1949–1953* (Venezia-Roma: Marsilio-Bianco & Nero, 2003), p. 203.

dy (the two leading genres in 1940s and 1950s Italy), their dilution of social commentary, a tendency toward serialization, and, more often than not, the presence of erotic elements. They therefore followed a path broken by more audience-friendly neorealist films such as Giuseppe De Santis' *BITTER RICE* (*Riso amaro*, 1949).

The international fortunes of highbrow neorealism have been explored in some detail, especially the role that Rossellini's and De Sica's film played in the birth of the North-American art film market.<sup>21)</sup> However, I believe that the transnational dimension of these popular films, which were either inspired by neorealism or which developed neorealist aesthetics, still need to be explored, especially their European distribution and reception, and their influence on European popular cinema. The German-Yugoslav and Italian co-production *SAND, LOVE AND SALT*, helps us to consider such issues in detail.

### ***Sand, Love and Salt***

The melodrama *SAND, LOVE AND SALT* was shot in the city of Piran and in the Sečovlje salt pans, both of which are to be found in the Slovenian part of Istria, although dialogue does not spotlight these as the film's settings. Its plot is divided into two parts: the first concentrates on a troubled romance between a young working-class woman named Marina (Isabelle Coray) and a fisherman called Piero (Marcello Mastroianni); the second, which is much darker in tone, focuses on Marina working in the salt pans under the brutal warden Alberto (Peter Carsten), and Alberto's defeat at the hands of Marina, Piero, and other salt pan workers. An extremely obscure film today, *SAND, LOVE AND SALT* was neither commercially nor critically successful upon original release; it was even cited as an example of bad filmmaking in a didactic article entitled "The film that is not art", which the critic France Brenk published in the aforementioned Croatian magazine *Filmska Kultura*.<sup>22)</sup> Yet, from a transnational perspective, *SAND, LOVE AND SALT* is of interest due to its most prominent textual feature: the affectation of Italian-ness. Italians watching this film in 1957 could have been forgiven for failing to distinguish it from the contemporaneous Italian popular dramas that had been modeled on *BITTER RICE*; films such as *RICE GIRL* (*La risaia*, 1956) and the Sophia Loren-vehicle *THE RIVER GIRL* (*La donna del fiume*, 1955). After all, *SAND, LOVE AND SALT* contains all these pictures' conventions: a poor but beautiful female lead, a brutal villain, an undetermined rural setting. The film also contains some of the more striking features of lowbrow neorealist melodrama: a catfight in the mud, an attempted rape, and, crucially, a dance act in the vein of the famous Silvana Mangano's boogie-woogie sequence at the beginning of De Santis' *BITTER RICE*. Moreover, the first part of *SAND, LOVE AND SALT* deliberately invokes pink neorealism comedy; the con-

21) See for example Tino Balio, *The Foreign Film Renaissance on American Screens, 1946–1973* (Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 2010), pp. 40–61.

22) Brenk's attitude toward the film can be summarized by a caption that he penned under a shot from the film: "Co-production *SAND, LOVE AND SALT*: Vich's cinematography is brilliant, and František Čáp's direction is skilful ... This is nonetheless kitsch". France Brenk, "Film koje nije umetnost", *Filmska Kultura*, no. 4 (1958), pp. 82.

stant bickering of Marina and Piero, who will eventually fall in love with each other, calls to mind a difficult relationship between the two peasant lovers in that paradigm of pink neorealism *TWO PENNYWORTH OF HOPE* (*Due soldi di speranza*, 1952). Finally, the title that this film bore in international markets was clearly intended to invite parallels to a pink neorealism series that began with the global success of the similarly named *BREAD, LOVE AND DREAMS* (*Pane, amore e fantasia*, 1953).

By contrast, the production history of *SAND, LOVE AND SALT* reveals that Italian involvement in this film was minimal. Where the Italian production company Rizzoli Film contributed an unusually low twenty-one percent of the film's budget, its leading actor Marcello Mastroianni was the only Italian creative practitioner to contribute to a film that was shot on location in Slovenia by a West German and Yugoslav crew.<sup>23)</sup> *SAND, LOVE AND SALT* started life as a West German-Yugoslav co-production that was going to be set in Southern Italy, only later to become a tripartite co-production shot in the Slovenian part of Istria. The companies that initially developed the project, Bavaria-Filmkunst and Zagreb Film, both decided to give their film a faux Italian identity before an Italian co-producer was involved.<sup>24)</sup> In this respect, the Italian textual and thematic aspects of *SAND, LOVE AND SALT* can be seen as an example of a process that Thomas Elsaesser had called "ImpersoNation"<sup>25)</sup> — mobilizing the stereotyped traits of a given nation in order to provide an international co-production with an easily identifiable, and therefore potentially marketable, national identity. Even though *SAND, LOVE AND SALT* was marketed in West Germany as a German film — promotional posters label it a "Bavaria-Filmkunst Produktion" — the "Italian-ness" of its neorealist iconography brands the film as Italian, thereby reaching out to moviegoers with an interest in Italian cinema, Italian stars, and Italian settings (those used in the film can easily be mistaken for Italian locations).<sup>26)</sup> What is more, Marina, Piero, and Alberto, are all Italian names, and this film elides the exact places in which its action occurs: it is made clear that Marina lives on the Adriatic shore, but it is not specified if her house or the island on which Piero lives are Italian, Croatian or Slovenian, even though sharp eyed viewers might recognize the Slovenian city of Piran as the setting of the first scene of the film. Moreover, both the early draft of the script and the brief synopsis attached to the co-production contract state that the story takes place in an "undefined place in Southern Italy", giving the film a general Italian feeling. Accordingly, *SAND, LOVE AND SALT* does not differ hugely from another Italian- German-Yugoslav co-pro-

23) *SAND, LOVE AND SALT*'s production history can be reconstructed by consulting the film's folder in the Italian Central Archives of the State in Rome: Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Ministero del Turismo e dello Spettacolo, Direzione Generale Cinema, Copioni e fascicoli, n. 2537.

24) The final co-production contract between Bavaria Film and Rizzoli only mentions Zagreb Film as a supplier of labor and equipment. However, the folder housed at the Rome archive also contains an excerpt from an earlier draft of this contract in which it is clearly stated that *SAND, LOVE AND SALT* is already a German-Yugoslav co-production and that Rizzoli is being asked to act as a potential minority stake co-producer. It is therefore possible that the Zagreb Film was absent from the Italian version of the co-production contract because there was no a formal co-production agreement between Italy and Yugoslavia until December 1957.

25) See Thomas Elsaesser, 'ImpersoNation: National Cinema, Historical Imaginaries and New Cinema Europe', in *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007).

26) I would argue that the city of Piran, in which the first sequence takes place, could quite easily be mistaken by a non-Italian audience for other cities on the shore of Veneto, or even for Venice itself.



duction starring Peter Carsten that was released in the same year: *THE WIDE BLUE ROAD* (*La grande strada azzurra*). In fact, the makers of this film also shot on the Slovenian coast, only this time as a stand-in for the Italian island of Sardinia.<sup>27)</sup>

It is unclear as to why Bavaria-Filmkunst and Zagreb Film would have imbued this film with a faux Italian identity. One explanation could be that the West-German audience was already familiar with lowbrow neorealism. Examples of highbrow neorealism such as *SHOESHINE* (*Sciuscià*, 1946) and *BICYCLE THIEVES* had been released in West Germany only several years after their original runs in Italian theaters (in 1952 and 1951 respectively). On the contrary, *CHAINS* (*Catene*, 1949), a melodrama set in Southern Italy and heavily influenced by neorealism, reached West Germany just one year after its Italian release. Moreover, Luigi Comencini's pink neorealist classic *BREAD, LOVE AND DREAMS* won a Silver Bear at the 1954 Berlin Film Festival, and was released in West German theatres soon after.

A number of factors could explain the success that these films enjoyed in West Germany. First, Italian lowbrow neorealism might have been perceived by the German audience as an exotic complement to, or substitute for, the Heimatfilm, an indigenous genre that eschewed urban settings, blended melodrama and comedy, and depicted everyday social conflict in the name of entertainment.<sup>28)</sup> It has also been pointed out that, in the 1950s, Italy was a popular tourist destination for Germans, and that Italian pop music received a significant amount of airtime on West German radio. As Chris Wahl suggests, at this time, German interest in the country was so high that Italy became the setting for two popular film types: "Italienschläger" or Italian Musical films, and the "Italienreisefilm" or Italian travelogue. Finally, an Italian motif surfaced in West German Heimatfilme: that of the good-natured and reliable German housewife being contrasted to the alluring but deceitful Italian seductresses.<sup>29)</sup>

*SAND, LOVE AND SALT* could also have been seen by its German co-producers as proximate to the Heimatfilm and the Italienreisefilm. In this respect, shortly after *SAND, LOVE AND SALT*, Bavaria Filmkunst and Rizzoli Film collaborated on a picture that reversed the terms of this model: *HOLIDAY ISLAND* (*Vacanze a Ischia*, 1957) was a comedy set in the popular tourist destination of Ischia, and paired French actress Isabelle Corey with Vittorio De Sica. This film suggests a strong relationship between Italian lowbrow neorealism and the German Reisefilm. Indeed, a number of pink neorealist films focused on mass tourism, a new phenomenon that started between the late 1940s and the early 1950s. Among them was Luciano Emmer's *SUNDAY IN AUGUST* (*Domenica d'agosto*, 1950), which was released in West Germany in 1956 as *Ein Sonntag im August*, at a point in time at which *SAND, LOVE AND SALT* was in preproduction. Similarly, the comedy-melodrama

27) The only location that is mentioned in the film is La Spezia near Genoa on the northern shore of the Tyrrhenian Sea. Moreover, the novel from which *THE WIDE BLUE ROAD* was adapted was set in Sardinia.

28) For the persisting role of the *Heimatfilm* in German cinema see Johannes von Moltke, 'Evergreens: The *Heimat* Genre', in Tim Bergfelder, Erica Carter and Deniz Göktürk (eds.), *The German Cinema Book* (London: BFI, 2002), pp. 18–28.

29) See Chris Wahl, 'Man Spricht "Italienisch". Italien im bundesdeutschen Film der 1950er Jahre', in Francesco Bono and Johannes Roschlau (eds.), *Tenöre, Touristen, Gastarbeiter. Deutsch-Italienische Filmbeziehungen* (Munich: Cinegraph — Richard Boorberg Verlag, 2011), pp. 133–143.

THE BEACH (*La spiaggia*, 1954) — a quality film set on the Italian Riviera that critically renegotiates aspects of neorealism<sup>30</sup> — was released in West Germany in 1954 as *DER SKANDAL*. The lowbrow neorealist comedies' touristic display of urbanity must also be taken into account. Thus, despite featuring characters that come from a working-class milieu, a series of films that was inaugurated by *A GIRL IN BIKINI* (*Poveri ma belli*, 1957) offered non-Italian audiences a veritable sightseeing tour of the most celebrated sites of Rome — from the Piazza Navona to the Piazza di Spagna and the Tiber shores.<sup>31</sup> The distribution of these films illustrates a close link between the circulation of lowbrow neorealism films that utilized touristic settings, on the one hand, and, on the other, the *Italienreisefilm*, the production of which reached a peak in the late 1950s with pictures such as *VOYAGE TO ITALY, COMPLETE WITH LOVE* (*Italienreise — Liebe inbegriffen*, 1958), and *BLOND MUSS MAN SEIN AUF CAPRI* (Wolfgang Schleif, 1961), which even starred Maurizio Arena of *A GIRL IN BIKINI* fame.

While *SAND, LOVE AND SALT*'s reliance on the iconography of a specific form of Italian cinema, in conjunction with the idea initially to set the film in Italy, can both be explained with reference to Italy's appeal to the West German audience, it is also worth noting that, although the film's screenplay was written by the Heimatfilm specialist Johannes Kai, its plot was conceived by the Yugoslav documentarian Vjekoslav Dobrinčić and its director František Čáp. An understanding of the transnational nature of this project, must therefore consider the input of this most cosmopolitan of directors. Already an established figure in the prewar film industries of both Austrian and Czechoslovak, Čáp continued to work in Czechoslovakia after the war. However, after his film about the Slovakian resistance, *WHITE SHADOWS* (*Bílá tma*, 1948), was attacked by the new communist regime, Čáp retreated to West Germany. His status as an exiled filmmaker is likely to have facilitated his working in different film industries, and his experimentation with styles and genres associated with diverse nations. In 1952, having made three films in West Germany, Čáp met Triglav Film's president Branimir Tuma, who offered him a job as this company's leading in-house director. Hiring Čáp was intended to provide Triglav Film with an experienced director who could enable the Yugoslav film industry to appropriate popular international genres. Because of Čáp's connections to both the West German and the Austrian film industries, Triglav Film was able to participate in international co-productions and bring foreign know-how and film styles to fully Yugoslav productions.<sup>32</sup> The most successful product of this relationship was Čáp's own 1953 film *VESNA*, which combined elements of the Heimatfilm and of pre-war Austrian comedies to become the top grossing Yugoslav film comedy of its day.

While making films for Triglav, Čáp also continued to work in West Germany, where he directed a remake of the classic Heimatfilm *DIE GEIERWALLY* (1956), as well as several international co-productions. The idea to initially set *SAND, LOVE AND SALT* in Italy might

30) See Francesco Di Chiara, *Generi e industria cinematografica in Italia. Il caso Titanus (1949–1963)* (Torino: Lindau, 2013).

31) *A GIRL IN BIKINI* was released in West Germany in 1957 as *ICH LASS MIR NICHT VERFÜHREN*.

32) See Lilijana Nedić, 'Frantisek Čáp, Ita Rina e il cinema sloveno nel contesto europeo', in Sergio Grmek Germani (ed.), *La meticcica di fuoco. Oltre il continente Balcani* (Venezia — Torino: La Biennale di Venezia — Lindau, 2000), pp. 117–122.

therefore have been a result of Čáp's knowledge that, in the late 1950s, Italy was well loved in West Germany and in the Yugoslav Federation, two film markets he knew intimately. Yugoslav pop culture was also heavily influenced by the Italian entertainment industry. As Pavičić points out, Croatian pop festivals of the late 1950s were modeled on the Italian Sanremo song festival, while the TV broadcasting system, which started showing western programs in 1956, aired primarily Italian programming. In this respect, the successful comedy *LOVE AND FASHION* (*Ljubav i moda*, 1960), in which the director of a fashion house uses Italian terms to appear hip, furnishes us with an instructive example of the Yugoslavian fondness for everything Italian. The idea to conceive *SAND, LOVE AND SALT* as a film heavily influenced by Italian cinema could therefore have been regarded by Čáp as an attempt to make this project marketable in West Germany and Yugoslavia.

## Conclusions

*SAND, LOVE AND SALT* was not well received. As a consequence, imbedding elements of lowbrow neorealism into Yugoslav cinema did not become a trend in the following years. Nevertheless, *SAND, LOVE AND SALT* demonstrates the extent to which, aside from being commercial products, co-productions with western partners enabled the Yugoslav film industry to experiment with new stylistic models and with themes associated with from overseas cinemas. Moreover, *SAND, LOVE AND SALT*'s production history highlights the transnational dimensions of genres of film that are typically seen as quintessentially "national" in their makeup, such as neorealist melodramas and Heimatfilme. This cosmopolitanism suggests that Tim Bergfelder's claims about the European genre cinema of the 1960s are also of relevance to the 1950s. According to Bergfelder, it was mostly at this time that European film industries, through co-productions and nationally neutral genres such as the adventure film, managed to produce cosmopolitan films that appealed both to European audiences and the American public.<sup>33)</sup> The case of *SAND, LOVE AND SALT* shows that, even in the 1950s, there were attempts to develop exportable fare, such as the neorealist comedies of Central and Eastern Europe — a practice that also is also exemplified by Italian-Spanish co-productions such as Luis García Berlanga's *CALABUCH* (1956) and *MIRACLES OF THURSDAY* (*Los jueves, milagro*, 1957). This case study also highlights the complex transnational dimensions of neorealism, which not only inspired the makers of Yugoslav art films, but also, in its lowbrow incarnations, provided a model for popular cinema.

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33) See Tim Bergfelder, *The Nation Vanishes. European Co-Production and Popular Genre Formula in the 1950s and 1960s*, in Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie (eds), *Cinema and Nation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp.139–151.

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## SUMMARY

**Looking for New Aesthetic Models through Italian-Yugoslavian Film Co-Productions: Lowbrow Neorealism in *Sand, Love and Salt***

Francesco Di Chiara

Having abandoned Soviet Realism in the late 1940s, the recently formed Yugoslav film industry looked elsewhere for suitable models with which to develop a national style of film. One option was to imitate the characteristics of other progressive cinemas, such as Italian neorealism. For this reason, in the second half of the 1950s, aspiring Yugoslav directors like Veljko Bulajić were sent to study to the Italian Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia in Rome, while Italian neorealist directors such as Giuseppe De Santis were invited to work in the Yugoslav film industry. Moreover, film co-productions with western European countries such as West Germany, France, and Italy, provided a profitable way of acquiring technical and stylistic know-how. Accordingly, this essay focuses on the case of the West German-Yugoslavian-Italian co-production of František Čáp's *Sand, Love and Salt* in order to examine how co-productions were used by the Yugoslav film industry to test out new film styles and genres, in this case by adopting the "lowbrow" neorealism of Italian melodrama and comedy.