

Jacqueline Reich

UNDRESSING THE LATIN LOVER

Marcello Mastroianni, fashion, and
*La dolce vita*¹

IN GIUSEPPE TORNATORE'S 1990 FILM, *Stanno tutti bene* (*Everybody's Fine*), Marcello Mastroianni portrays an ageing widower, Matteo Scuro, who has decided to make a surprise visit to his children. The first stop on his journey is Naples, the home of his son Alvaro, who unbeknownst to him is in prison. As he futilely awaits Alvaro's return, Matteo is approached by a young prostitute, who, as she lifts her skirt to reveal her shapely leg, says, 'Grandpa, do you want some company? Look at these legs!' He slowly puts down his suitcases and pulls up his pant leg to reveal a thin, pale leg covered mostly by a dark knee sock and replies, 'Hey, look at mine!'

Although intended to comment on the character's state of innocence and zest for life, this scene constitutes one of the rare appearances of Marcello Mastroianni's naked legs on the screen. In fact, in his 160 odd screen appearances, Mastroianni's body is rarely eroticised. This lack of masculine secularisation, particularly in the 1950s when Mastroianni began his film career, is somewhat against the norm. This period in film history is in fact what Steven Cohan has called 'The Age of the Chest' in both American films, featuring such stars as William Holden, Marlon Brando, and Charlton Heston, and in Italian popular cinema, particularly the many biblical epics and peplum films (Cohan 1997: 164–200; Dyer 1997: 145–83).

If Mastroianni's body as imaged in Italian cinema does not depend on the secularisation and the eroticisation of the male form, how does one explain the attribution of the term 'Latin Lover' to Mastroianni, a label he detested and struggled against up to his death in December 1996? In what follows, I wish to argue that the image of Mastroianni as Latin Lover has as much to do with the Italian post-war economic boom and the commodification of Italy on an international level as it does with Mastroianni star persona. The Latin Lover is above all a *product*, a consumer icon, a cultural commodity offered up for consumption to

an international public. Mastroianni was a symbol for Italian style, for a style of life that resonated with a national public experiencing greater prosperity after years of struggle and with an international consumer market hungry for all things Italian.

This chapter examines the interrelated phenomenon of the Latin Lover and 1950s consumer culture in the light of the film which came to epitomise this phenomenon, Federico Fellini's *La dolce vita* (1959). Both the genesis and the success of *La dolce vita* arose in part out of the post-war cultural climate of Rome as it evolved from 'open city' to the hot spot of the rich, famous, and beautiful. Fellini was inspired by this new Roman culture, particularly the Via Veneto, which in the 1950s came to symbolise the post-war economic rebound after years of struggle and reconstruction. It became a haven for the international jet set, the cultural elite, and the Italian and American film communities. As a result of this world-wide exposure, by the late 1950s Italy emerged as a cosmopolitan style-maker and trendsetter with the success of the Vespa, the Fiat 500, and, last but not least, Italian fashion.

In the end, Fellini's film unmasks the superficiality and the materialism of this growing consumer culture precisely through a baring of the fashion system. Through its critical presentation of fashion and clothing, *La dolce vita* subtly critiques traditional constructs of Italian masculinity, in particular the *bella figura*, the public manifestation of the private self through behaviour and appearance. In the film, Fellini dresses up the journalist Marcello Rubini, as played by Mastroianni, in the latest Italian fashion but ultimately strips him bare to reveal a man at odds rather than triumphant over a rapidly changing economic, social, and sexual environment.

La dolce vita recounts a week in the life of Marcello Rubini, a writer making his living stalking the rich and famous for the gossip columns in Rome. Critics have traditionally broken the film down into a series of seven episodes taking place over seven days and nights, with a prologue (the arrival of the statue of Christ in St Peter's square), an interlude (Marcello meets the young girl Paola at the beach), and an epilogue (Marcello's final encounter with Paola) (Bondanella 1993: 143-4). The film's narrative trajectory is that of a journey or a quest: a quest for meaning in the morally and spiritually vacuous milieu of late 1950s Rome. Rather than a mimetic representation, Fellini's portrait of the Eternal City is highly personal and allegorical. The image that emerges is a city that has lost its connection to its ancient roots, preoccupied instead with immediate gratification, be it sexual, personified in the character of Maddalena; exploitative, as with the *paparazzi*; or spiritual, in the sightings of the Madonna. This loss is also expressed in terms of the city's architecture. There is a stark contrast in the films between the old (the Trevi fountain, the Termi di Caracalla, San Pietro) and the new (the housing developments, the highways, the desolate industrial countryside), epitomising urban modernisation's corruption of a pre-modern innocence (Sparke 1990: 230).

Mastroianni, as a result of his role as Marcello, was labelled the newest incarnation of the Latin Lover. How did the Latin Lover tag come to be applied to Mastroianni, if, as I claim, the role that solidified that image deconstructs that iconic rubric? The reasons have little to do with Mastroianni himself (although his very public off-screen affairs with many of his co-stars helped to proliferate the image), and more to do with what exactly a Latin Lover is, and how it relates to both the international image of Italy and Italian masculinity. A cultural symbol

of the Italian as other, the Latin Lover has become the 'imagined' embodiment of the primitive, whose unrestrained and exotic passion directly affronts the more civilised and restrained Northern European or American society (Allen 1997: 3; Dickie 1996: 19–33). Much of this differentiation is due to the fact that Italy has consistently been seen as a backward as opposed to a modern nation. The origins of this concept of backwardness lie, according to John Agnew, in Italy's many historical failings and inadequacies in achieving a modern state: its inability to fulfil the promises of Renaissance glory as well as its failure to develop into a concrete and stable political identity after the *Risorgimento*. Furthermore, Italy's late industrialisation, and consequential slow development of a bourgeois ruling class, its ties to a more traditional, family-based way of life, and its distrust of government have created spaces of difference between it and other more 'Westernised' countries (Agnew 1997: 23–42).

The Latin Lover is also a product of popular culture, a consumer icon turned real, which played off and exploited these cultural clashes (Malossi 1996: 24). The cultural archetype of the Latin Lover, despite coming to fruition in the 1950s, dates back to the literary, musical and theatrical incarnations of the Don Juan/Don Giovanni myth, which engaged European culture from the Renaissance onward (Forti-Lewis 1992: 11–31). On the screen, the hysterical fan culture surrounding Rudolph Valentino created the first international hybrid of Latin Lover: the Italian immigrant who achieves the American dream first through dance, then on-screen exoticism (Studlar 1996: 150–98). After Valentino's death, actors such as Alberto Rabagliati, the Italian winner of the 1928 studio-sponsored 'Next Rudolph Valentino Contest', the American John Gilbert and Ramon Novarro, the Spanish hybrid who failed to achieve the same status as Valentino in the eyes of the female public (Panaro 1996: 95–113), attempted to fill the void.²

After Valentino, just being an Italian male was often enough for future Italian stars in Hollywood to garner the label of the Latin Lover. Rossano Brazzi's roles in *Three Coins in the Fountain* (dir. Jean Negulesco, 1954), *The Barefoot Contessa* (dir. Joseph Mankiewicz, 1954) and *Summertime* (dir. David Lean, 1955) played off the fantasy of the exotic, erotic Italian seducing the prim, responsible American woman with his ardent behaviour and eulogies to love.³ It was a fantasy that was rapidly becoming a reality. In 1955, the year of *Summertime*'s release (UK title: *Summer Madness*), more Americans visited Europe than ever before, and one of their main destinations, especially for female tourists, was Italy ('Love transforms a plain Jane' 1955: 55).

Thus the rubric of the Latin Lover was well established in the United States and just waiting for Mastroianni, in spite of the fact that the actor did not make a movie in Hollywood until 1992. His films, however, came to the United States at a time when the boundaries between mainstream and art-house cinema were beginning to break down. *La dolce vita*, Mastroianni's first big success in the United States, became the first cross-over hit in terms of both box office receipts and audience reception: it became the highest-grossing foreign film ever released. His popularity continued into the 1960s with *Divorce*, *Italian Style*, for which he was nominated for an Academy Award; Fellini's *8½*, an Academy Award winner; and his collaborations with Sophia Loren, many of which were dubbed and then released on the non-art house circuit.

As opposed to the extracinematic image of Marcello Mastroianni as Latin Lover, however, the character of Marcello Rubini in *La dolce vita* is representative of a more prevalent phenomenon which runs throughout the representation of masculinity in post-war Italian cinema: that of the *inetto*, the Italian incarnation of the *schlemiel* or anti-hero. For Sanford Pinsker, in his study on the *schlemiel* as metaphor in Jewish literature and culture, the *schlemiel* is someone 'who handles a situation in the worst possible manner or is dogged by an ill luck that is more or less due to his own ineptness' (Pinsker 1991: 2). As opposed to the *schlimazl*, who is more the victim of pure bad luck, the *schlemiel* is usually an agent in his own destruction.

Gian Paolo Biasin has traced the origins of the Italian version of the *schlemiel*, the anti-hero or *inetto*, to twentieth-century poetry and prose. Biasin notes how the modern and contemporary protagonists of Western literature have departed from the models of Greek and Roman epic hero. They are defined not by action but rather passivity, intellectualism and artistic sensibility; they are successes rather than failures, mired in bourgeois mediocrity rather than stellar achievement (Biasin 1989: 69–107).

The Italian *inetto*, while rooted in the comic tradition of the *commedia dell'arte*, does not, in its most recent incarnations in literature and film, necessarily fit within the genre of comedy. While the *inetto* does loom as the cultural antecedent to the incompetent, bumbling protagonists who populate the *commedia all'italiana* films (comedy Italian style) of the 1950s and 1960s (and Roberto Benigni's populist reincarnations in the 1990s), traces of his existence appear in the alienated, lost souls of Michelangelo Antonioni's modernist films, such as *La notte* (1960) and *Blowup* (1966), as well as the sexually and socially challenged Southerners who populate Lina Wertmüller's class commentaries. This modern incarnation of the *inetto* actively chooses passivity and ineptitude as a way of life – it is his strategy. Biasin states:

When applied to the hero, 'strategy' has an active, aggressive connotation; when applied to the anti-hero, it has a passive, self-defensive, self-ironic quality . . . In any case strategy points to the environment, not to the subject, and this environment is definitely hostile, if not cruel and violent.

(Biasin 1989: 78)

For Biasin, the anti-hero's circumstance in contemporary Italian culture is one of alienation, as well as the self-conscious ironisation of that condition.

The *inetto*, moreover, constitutes the negative binary opposite of phallic constructions of Italian masculinity, many of which have found representations in Italian cultural forms over the centuries: the valiant and brave soldier of the Roman Empire, the Machiavellian Renaissance prince, and the Casanova. Rather than active, he is passive; rather than brave, he is cowardly; rather than sexually potent, he is either physically or emotionally impotent. Thus the *inetto* articulates the traditional binary opposite of the masculine, that is the feminine, as it is constructed in Italian culture and society, and as it relates to sexuality: the cuckold, the impotent and feminised man.⁴ Moreover, his shortcomings and failings

correspond to the anti-masculine. His passivity, impotency and alienation are in direct opposition to the prescribed masculine norms of Italian culture.

How does Marcello Rubini become Fellini's version of the *inetto*? Throughout the course of the film, Marcello fails to accomplish anything. Incapable of making a choice between journalism and literature, he semi-prostitutes himself instead to the tabloids. Mired in mediocrity, he succumbs to the temptations of bourgeois and aristocratic decadence. He even chooses the wrong masculine ideal role models to turn to for potential guidance: the false intellectual Steiner, as well as his narcissistically absorbed, ageing father.⁵ Marcello's passivity and metaphoric impotence also reveal themselves in his relationships with women. With Emma, Maddalena, Sylvia and Paola, he searches for some meaning to his existence but ultimately remains frustrated. He becomes prey, albeit at first willingly, to Maddalena's sexual games at the prostitute's house and the castle. He fails either to commit himself to or extricate himself from his relationship with his fiancée Emma. With Sylvia in the Trevi fountain, however, in what has become the iconic emblem of the film, the era, and Mastroianni's Latin Lover image, Marcello's constitution as the modern *inetto* fully exhibits itself.

Although the presence of the American actress Sylvia references the cultural climate of late 1950s Rome, specifically the large Hollywood community shooting films there, her character symbolically signifies much more. For Marcello, at the party at the Caracalla Baths, she is everything in a material sense: 'the first woman of the first day of creation . . . the mother, the sister, the lover, the friend, angel, the devil, the earth, the house'. She also personifies an animalesque physicality, not just in the corporeality of her statuesque figure, but also in her connections to the animal world (the cat, the howling along with the dogs, the fur stole she wears, her mane-like hair) and her proximity to the earth itself (she consistently appears barefoot). She stands out from her Roman counterparts and surroundings in both her Nordic features and her embodiment of an earthly sensuality lacking in the material city. Her primitive and uncontrolled, rather than 'civilised' and proscribed existence, offers a possible alternative to Marcello's bourgeois malaise.

In the Trevi fountain sequence, Marcello joins the modern incarnation of Nordic, earthly Venus as she bathes in the waters of the Eternal City, symbolised in the fountain's connection to both Ancient Rome (the ancient aqueduct is its source) and Papal Rome (it was commissioned by Pope Clement XII and completed by the sculptor Nicolo Salvi in 1735). Yet he is unable physically to touch and metaphorically to connect with his potential salvation. As she metonymically baptises him into this new world, the fountain shuts off, symbolising, for Bondanella, 'a clear sign of his spiritual impotence', or rather his incapacity to reject the material in favour of the sensual (Bondanella 1993: 147).

The abrupt cessation of the flowing waters, however, does have important implications for the representation of masculinity, and not just in terms of Christian iconography. This harsh interruption implies castration not only in the strictly Freudian sense: that the figure of the woman, here directly associated with the waters, personifies that threat. It also symbolises castration in more general terms: faced with sexual and sensual pleasure incarnated in Sylvia's body, Marcello is rendered immobile, rigid, and is denied release. His anxious reawakening from his sensual stupor once the flow of water is suspended intends a sexual and

psychological frigidity in the face of both unbridled female sexuality and the salvific potential of abandonment to that earthly sensuality.

Marcello's narrative trajectory is the opposite of the classical Hollywood character arch: rather than passing from a state of darkness into an awareness and light, he ultimately descends further into that darkness. However, in keeping with the modern *inetto*, he actively chooses that strategy. Devastated by the Steiner murder-suicide, he plummets into a moral, spiritual and sexual abyss, epitomised by the orgy sequence near the end of the film. The carnivalesque setting, complete with transvestites, stripteases, and insinuations of homosexuality, cinematically codifies the scene as one of lascivious degradation and ethereal emptiness. Marcello's final rejection of Paola at the beach, framed by the encounter with the monstrous fish, underscores not only his alienation but also alienation as a dynamic decision.

This 'strategy' is marked throughout the film in terms of fashion. Fashion was in fact an inspiration for Fellini in *La dolce vita*, in particular the women's sack dress. The sack dress, a popular style in the late 1950s, was an unconstructed sheath-like dress which, according to Brunello Rondi, one of Fellini's collaborators on the film, possessed that sense of luxurious butterflying out around a body that might be (physically) beautiful but not morally so; these sack dresses struck Fellini because they rendered a woman very gorgeous who could, instead, be a skeleton of squalor and solitude inside (Bondanella 1993: 134).

The growing divide between surface and substance is a theme that runs throughout *La dolce vita*, and one that hinges, in many aspects, on the fashion system in general and the history and nature of the Italian fashion industry in particular.

The Italian fashion industry was integral to Italy's economic and cultural revival after the fall of the fascist regime. As Italian borders opened up to international markets, one of the main areas of interest for consumers and investors was Italian fashion and design (Ginsborg 1990: 72–5, 94). Italy had long enjoyed a reputation as being the site of superb craftsmanship, particularly in the accessories market of shoes and leather goods as well as with fabric, especially silk. The industry was aided by Italian financial groups who saw fashion as the best product to circulate in the global marketplace. They actively recruited the participation of Italian tailors and designers such as Oleg Cassini and Salvatore Ferragamo who had emigrated to the United States and enjoyed success there (Morelli 1985: 58–65). These designers set the stage for the wave of Italian fashion that would sweep the United States in the 1950s.

Another important factor that contributed to Italian fashion's rise to prominence was a series of financial and image problems afflicting the French fashion industry, long the dominant trend-setter for women's fashion (Settembrini 1994: 484–94). The first Italian designers, many of whom had worked behind the scenes in the Paris ateliers, preserved the lines of French style. However, they made their clothes with the high-quality fabrics for which Italy was known, with cheap labour as a result of the high post-war unemployment rate, and with a superb attention to line and form. Designs by Emilio Pucci, the Sorelle Fontana, and Emilio Schuberth reflected a simplicity in style, a focus on detail, and a sophisticated use of colour which would come to characterise Italian fashion for the next decade (Settembrini 1994: 485–7; Steele 1994: 496–506).

Moreover, the money invested in the Italian fashion industry after the Second World War did not exclude the male sector. The guiding principle for Italian designers, led by the Roman fashion house of Brioni, was to free the body from the often restrictive clothing of British designs. Rather than tying clothing to class and power, men's fashion on the Italian front came to be associated with a more relaxed way of life, liberating it from the rigidity of an aristocratic legacy and anchoring it firmly in the growing middle class. The idea was to project the new ideology of informality, leisure and pleasure, essential qualities of the new *dolce vita* which post-war prosperity allowed, and from which Fellini would draw inspiration (Settembrini 1993: 13–33; McDowell 1997: 94–5, 137–40; Chenoune 1993: 241–50; 1998: 6–15).

One key factor of the Italian style was its broad appeal to all classes, not just the rich and famous. According to Ted Polhemus, Italian men of differing social status considered dressing well both a privilege and a responsibility (Polhemus 1994: 45). This emphasis on projecting an Italian male style is linked to the cultural heritage of the *bella figura*, reflecting a taste for public display of self-worth through appearance, regardless of class or gender (Nardini 1998: 5–33). Akin to the Northern European figures of the English dandy and the French *flâneur*, the *bella figura* dates back to the Renaissance figure of the courtier and the concept of *sprezzatura*. In Castiglione's *Il libro del cortegiano* (The Book of the Courtier), *sprezzatura* is a courtly ideal – the opposite of affectation and the epitome of grace, denoting a naturalness in appearance that belies the effort that went into its preparation (Castiglione 1972: 61–2).

In the ideals of both *sprezzatura* and the *bella figura*, the performative aspect of Italian masculinity begins to reveal itself. The Italian male literally puts on a show for an admiring public. Like the dandy, the *bella figura* parades his sense of style, his masculinity, and his sensuality, regardless of his social and economic status. Both individual and national identity are written on the body through clothing and grooming and paraded for the community, be it urban or rural (Malossi 1993: 37–42). While the dandy is the object of the gaze and the *flâneur* the subject, the *bella figura* is at once both spectacle and spectator. His aim is both to be seen and be recognised as important and full of honour, as well as to see that others recognise these traits in him. This dual function is possible in part due to the site of the performance: public space, be it the piazza (such as the Piazza del Campo in Siena), or the main street of a town or city (in *La dolce vita*'s case, the Via Veneto).⁶ The architectonics of the *bella figura* thus breaks the typical spectator/spectacle dichotomy – the structure of public space, as opposed to the private stage, allows for the simultaneous situation of looking and being looked at.

If the public arena is the *bella figura*'s stage, then fashion, in particular the suit, becomes his costume. According to Anne Hollander, suits, since their birth in the later seventeenth century, have been seen as 'naturally masculine'. She traces their modern evolution back to the Enlightenment, when, influenced as well by a rediscovery of classical antiquity, the suit began to adhere to the contours of the Ancient Greek and Roman male ideal. Broad shoulders, small waist, and long legs became the 'new anatomical foundation' for the modern man, 'expressed not in bronze or marble but in natural wool, linen and leather'. Hollander believes that the

modern suit has survived because it has retained its ability to suggest that classical nudity and exude a 'confident male sexuality' (Hollander 1995: 63–113).

Hollander's use of Mediterranean models of masculinity in her analysis of the relationship between a man's clothing and his sexuality is particularly appropriate for the Italian scene. Her discussion, however, presupposes a unified and unconflicting definition of masculinity, as well as a definite correspondence between clothing and male subjectivity: that is, what a man wears necessarily reveals who he is socially and sexually. This theory is questioned if that correspondence is negated: what if a man's attire becomes instead his costume, a Pirandellian mask which not only conceals the fragmentary nature of male subjectivity but also projects a radically different social identity? Stella Bruzzi, in her work on fashion and cinema, notes that men's clothing in film often works against character. In her analysis of recent Franco-American gangster films, the emphasis placed on dressing well often masks unstable masculinity. When the gangsters don these suits, modelled in fact on *la linea italiana* (the Italian line) of the late 1950s, they are allowed to assume the traditional position of power and control. Without the costume, however, they may as well be naked. Vulnerable and frail, they reveal, as does Marcello Rubini's character in *La dolce vita*, the tendentious state of 'conventionalised masculinity' (Bruzzi 1997: 67–94).

Fellini takes this notion of a discontinuity between surface and substance in relation to fashion and clothing one step further. Although he dresses Marcello in the latest fashions, this costuming fails to mask his moral, spiritual and sexual failings. Throughout the course of the *La dolce vita*, Piero Gherardi, the costume designer, has clothed Marcello in a variety of stylish suits, intended to epitomise the suave, debonair urban bourgeois male and representative of Italian men's fashion at its best. He wears highly tailored, single-breasted jackets with thin lapels and a single flap; slim-fitting pleated but narrow trousers; clean-pressed white, thinly striped, or dark shirts with cufflinks and thin dark ties; and the requisite pointed Italian shoes and dark sunglasses. This stylish image further enhanced the extracinematic association of Mastroianni as Latin Lover. Costume and fashion, specifically Italian fashion, have always played an integral role in the 'imagined' figure of the Latin Lover. The Latin Lover's success on and off the screen depended on projecting a casual but 'elegant and refined manner,' epitomised by the cravat and open-necked shirt (Romano 1996: 60–3). Rossano Brazzi had a whole new wardrobe made for his 1957 trip to the US to film *South Pacific*, saying 'I must carry the bold flag of Italian elegance' ('A Titre de Revanche' 1957). In *La dolce vita*, Marcello Rubini's ubiquitous dark sunglasses, his cufflinks, and the style of the white linen suit with dark shirt he wears at the end of the film became fashion trends (Bagley 1994: 100). Mastroianni notes bitterly how after he made that film, producers and distributors only wanted to cast him as the Latin Lover because they 'only wanted to see me in the V-shaped jacket with gold buttons' (Mastroianni 1997: 61). As the latest incarnation of the Latin Lover, Mastroianni in *La dolce vita* became, like Italian fashion itself, one of Italy's greatest and most successful exports (Dewey 1993: 142–6).

Ironically, however, while the national and international public embraced the Latin Lover style and the Italian consumer culture, the text employs fashion, costume and make-up to subvert the material superficiality of that image and the

era. Signs of Marcello's moral emptiness and inevitable decay appear throughout *La dolce vita*, and are marked precisely by fashion and appearance. Physically, Fellini wanted Marcello to appear at once intense and hollow. His eyes were masked by fake eyelashes and very little attention was focused on them. The lighting on his face is full of shadows (Kezich 1996: 95). Hints of Marcello's impending demise appear at Steiner's apartment after the murder-suicide: his tie is loose, his top shirt-collar unbuttoned, his normally slicked-back hair out of place. In the final scenes at the beach, fashion signals the *inetto's* strategy as Marcello descends into his moral, spiritual and sexual abyss. He wears the inversion of his original and signature outfit: instead of the dark suit with crisp shirt, he opts for a rumpled and dishevelled white linen suit with the dark shirt. The *bella figura* has become the grotesque *brutta figura*: the fashion emblem of the Latin Lover, the cravat with open-necked shirt, here serves as ironic commentary on the emptiness of that label and the culture it embraced.

In the end, Mastroianni had this to say about the role of Marcello in *La dolce vita* and the Latin Lover image ascribed to him as a result:

Yes, from *La dolce vita* on, this label of the Latin Lover, which doesn't fit me, stuck to me. At first I played chauffeurs, ingenuous workers, modest but very nice young men. After this film new proposals for more intellectually committed roles started to arrive, but there was always some story in the middle involving the Latin Lover, with which I had nothing to do because I have never been one. In fact, I was always busy saying: 'Excuse me, but in *La dolce vita* this protagonist is not a lady-killer – he doesn't conquer anyone. If anything he is the one conquered. It's women who use him and he, being provincial, innocently falls for it every time! The foreign actress uses him; his mistress uses him, even though she may be the only one over whom he has the least bit of authority; the woman in the castle of aristocrats uses him – he is only the victim!' So, I'm not exactly sure what this idiotic term palmed off on me means. People have labelled me as such evidently because I wore a blue blazer in the film and moved in a circle with a lot of women.

(Fofi and Faldini 1981: 17)

Mastroianni's comments address several important issues that I hope to have stressed in this chapter. First, that the Latin Lover image, more than a direct reflection of the characters the actor portrayed throughout his career, is a consumer icon, marketed to the international public who hungered for Italian commodities, including sexualised images of Italian masculinity. What was being consumed in *La dolce vita* in 1959 was not only the European Don Giovanni but also an Italian style, based on the emergence of Italian fashion and design in the international marketplace. Mastroianni as commodity was tied to other Italian products, specifically, as even he notes, Italian fashion, with the 'blue jacket' as indicative of the relaxed Italian style of the 'sweet life'.

The film's emphasis on materialism, superficiality, and spiritual abandonment has important consequences for contemporary masculinity. Marcello Rubini is far

from the masculine ideal of the *bella figura*. Rather he is the modern anti-hero and *inetto*, among the first in a long line that Mastroianni would immortalise on the screen. Passive rather than active, conquered rather than the conqueror, he reflects the crisis of masculinity in an Italy dominated by materialist conservatism and spiritual decadence. At odds with rather than triumphant over his environment, his final strategy is physical masochism, ethereal annihilation, and a major fashion *faux pas*.

Notes

- 1 I would like to thank Toby Miller, James Mandrell, and Eva Woods for their help on this article. All translations from Italian to English are mine unless otherwise noted.
- 2 Latin American actors also benefited from Valentino-mania. Figures such as Ramon Novarro, Antonio Moreno and Gilbert Roland of the silent era and later Ricardo Montalban and Fernando Lamas came to fill the Latin Lover void created by Valentino's death. An essential difference between Italian Latin lovers and their Spanish-speaking counterparts was genre (the latter being almost exclusively relegated to the musical in the sound era) and class (with the Italians usually belonging to the professional ranks and the Hispanics the working class) (López 1997: 315–17; Noriega 1993: 52–66; Reyes and Rubie 1994: 1–20).
- 3 Even though Ava Gardner's character was Spanish in *The Barefoot Contessa*, her Hollywood glamour image was so ingrained in American popular culture that her 'Americanness' was never in doubt, despite her admirable attempt to reproduce a Spanish lilt to her English.
- 4 Freud's concept of innate bisexuality of the human subject lies at the crux of Dennis Bingham's work on stardom and masculinity. For Bingham, the deconstruction of the masculine persona reveals 'man's identification with his repressed femininity' (Bingham 1994: 9).
- 5 Marcello's passivity and state of impotence has not gone unnoticed by critics. Frank Burke notes the character's inability to change throughout the film, resulting in a creative negation, as opposed to *La notte di Cabiria's* life-affirming ideology (Burke 1996: 98–103).
- 6 Donald Pitkin notes how Italians, as opposed to their European neighbours, have privileged and idealised the urban over the rural space, and that that very public space has been 'domesticated', thus blurring the distinction between public and private (Pitkin 1993: 95–101).

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