

Dalle Vacche, Angela. Diva: Defiance and Passion in Early Italian Cinema. Austin: University of Texas Press, March 2008.

Chapter 4. Wings of Desire: Aviation, Fashion, and Circus Stunts

The first Italian airplane flew in 1908, when the cinema had just taken off; together the airplane and the cinema redefined the boundaries of vision and, consequently, of subjectivity. (1) Both media, one for transportation, the other for communication, accommodated the possibility of living beyond one's body, in defiance of gravity and history. Italy excelled in the design of airplanes, just as it did in racing cars. The famous brand names, Ferrari and Fiat, found their aerial counterparts in the Savoia-Marchetti, the Macchi, the Monfalconi. (2) The analogy, however, between earthbound and airbound vehicles stops at the cult of elegant design. The perceptual model conjured by the airplane was even more unsettling than the one involved in terrestrial transportation. To be sure, the train, like the cinema, is about time passing and movement through space, but the airplane and the cinema together showed the possibility of flying up further and further, to the point of making everything look small. The invention of the airplane marks the twinning of modern technology with a visual vertigo.

In line with the Futurists' glorification of machines,

flying quickly took on cosmic and visionary connotations which are more appropriate for science fiction than for military or commercial applications. In Pirandello's Shoot!, this quasi-divine version of technology emerges through the special social privileges enjoyed by a professor of astronomy whose last name is Zeme, a strange variation on seme or seed. In keeping with Pirandello's taste for the combination of opposites, Professor Zeme, who runs the astronomical observatory, is an old man with a name that sounds like the beginning of a plant buried in the earth. (3) Furthermore, in Shoot!, Pirandello's irony about flying justifies the name of Fantappiè, not far from fantascienza, the Italian word for science fiction. He is the comedian who stars in innumerable short adventure films for a production house called Kosmograph where the cinematographe sounds like a sci-fi program for the re-writing of the cosmos. To be sure, Fantappiè is torn between holding his feet to the earth and his desire to go to the moon by interpreting a new film. (4)

This airborne redesigning of the body, through the mobilization of the eye and the defiance of weight, was not only a theme of the art nouveau style, but also an agenda consonant with the reshaping of the self sought by men and women at the beginning of a new century. By taking humans into the heavens, the airplane enabled male pilots to feel God-like, but it also

showed women what it could be like to drop the "man" of hu/man below, onto the earth. Yet any discussion of aerial motifs in turn-of-the-century Italy must begin with two self-made, pre-cinematic stars: F.T. Marinetti (1876-1944), the leader of the Futurist avant-garde, and Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863-1938), the major figure of Italian literary Symbolism. Shortly before the outbreak of World War I, the airplane found two major advocates in Marinetti and D'Annunzio, who wielded immense influence in both Italian intellectual life and the popular media. If stardom can be said to have existed before its establishment in the cinema, Marinetti and D'Annunzio held the monopoly on it. Everything they said or did was always an event, a scandal, a statement.

The airplane fad was only one among many passionate interests cultivated by these two eclectic personalities. Indeed, they were eclectic to the point of self-contradiction. To begin with, the linear optimism of some of Marinetti's Futurist statements was in keeping with automobile races, and at odds with the airplane's disappearance behind the clouds; furthermore, the airplane, tied as it was to modern technology, clashed with D'Annunzio's love of monuments and ruins. Yet both cinema and the airplane were too new and too exciting to be ignored.

Marinetti's and D'Annunzio's early support of the airplane

not only showed their eagerness to be ahead of the very latest trend but heightened their public image as men of action. Thus they flew or wrote about flying even before the outbreak of the Libyan Campaign of 1911-12, Italy's first colonial adventure in North Africa. It was this conflict that made the rest of the world realize that the airplane was here to stay as a weapon of war. Even before the Libyan Campaign, Marinetti had linked aviation to masculinity. The protagonist of his Mafarka the Futurist: An African Novel (1909) is a pilot who rapes the wind and feels a terrible hate for the earth below. (5) Inasmuch as woman was despised by Futurism, she was deeply envied. Mafarka's behavior, for instance, exemplifies the ultimate procreative male fantasy: after landing, he copulates with a chair, and fathers a mechanical son.

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Instead of taking the aggressive sexual stance of Marinetti's aero-futurism, Gabriele D'Annunzio held on to moonlight, seduction, intrigue, and love letters. D'Annunzio peopled his novels with languid, androgynous women and effete, male aristocrats. But he was also a daring aviator. On January 16, 1916, during World War I, the poet was flying toward the Italian city of Trieste, which was being fought over by the Austrians and the Italians. All of a sudden he was forced to

make a dangerous sea landing near the beaches of Grado. Such a traumatic experience did not keep him away from airplanes. In 1918 D'Annunzio climbed into the cockpit once more. He flew from Venice to Vienna, the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, dropping along the way thousands of leaflets that called for the liberation of Trieste.

While Marinetti achieved a strange mixture of disembodiment into vision and hyper-masculinization of military technology, D'Annunzio managed to combine the amorous Don Giovanni with the intrepid hero, the modern Icarus with the patriot, the aristocratic dandy with the tough leader of a commando action. In 1919 D'Annunzio went up into the sky again and conquered Fiume, a city near Trieste that is now in Slovenia. Following this success, D'Annunzio drafted a new legislation for the area, the Carta del Carnaro; one of his major initiatives had to do with granting women the right to vote. A few years later, in 1923, the Duce, Benito Mussolini, was so impressed by D'Annunzio's two aerial feats that he gave the poet a personal hydroplane as a gift. (6)

D'Annunzio's favourite pseudonym was "Ariel," from the character in Shakespeare's The Tempest (1610-11), and he was obsessed with flying beings in general. When the poet in a clumsy moment fell from a window at the Vittoriale, he humorously labeled the episode "volo d'arcangelo" (angel's

flight). (7) Flying, for D'Annunzio, involved quite a bit of military heroism but it was also, and perhaps above all, a poetic enterprise. After losing one eye in 1916, during his forced landing, the poet started to speak of his third eye, as if the physical injury had opened the door to a sixth sense. D'Annunzio's fascination with the irrational, his love of perfumes, and his experimentation with drugs could not be farther from Mafarka's high-tech, monolithic machismo among the clouds. (8)

But what is most important about these two writers' love for the airplane is that this new invention was made of death and exhilaration. Perhaps they put on wings, believing that self-destruction might become the first step toward rebirth. Unfortunately, this regenerative view of military technology, including a violent use of the airplane, fueled enthusiasm for World War I. Considering the Mediterranean context linking Italy and North Africa through Libya, and Italy and Greece through Rome, Marinetti's and D'Annunzio's allegiance to the airplane suggests a rewriting of the Icarus myth. This ancient Greek tale is about a father, Daedalus the inventor, and his son, Icarus the explorer. The story is well-known, except for the ending that concerns Daedalus: after Icarus crashes into the sea because he flew too close to the sun, Daedalus--the architect of the labyrinth for the Minotaur--flies safely to Sicily on his

own set of wings and is received kindly by the king. (9) While Icarus's wings are easily comparable to the airplane, his death hardly fits the fantasy of rebirth behind Marinetti's all-seeing Futurist flier and D'Annunzio's dissolution of visual language into sound effects of cosmic import. These two writers' passion for the airplane makes sense only if Icarus does not really die and if Daedalus, who lands in Sicily, is not the father but a "new" Icarus--a mechanical Futurist man, in Marinetti's case, and a refined aesthete, were he to embrace D'Annunzio's ways. In fact, the poet's longing for all sorts of male alter-egos was expressed through the androgynous female heroines of his novels.

Women In Flight

In the wake of Marinetti's and D'Annunzio's highly publicized experiences with the airplane, Italian men and women got involved in different degrees with both aspects of the airplane's appeal: first, the airplane as a weapon for military action; second, the airplane as a fantasy of imaginative freedom. More specifically, in the days of the Libyan Campaign, shortly before World War I broke out in Italy in 1915, Marinetti and D'Annunzio were not the first or the only celebrities roaming the skies. In an issue of La Donna, a women's magazine published in Turin and dated 5 February 1911, the theater actress Lyda Borelli appears on a lavish front-page spread.

Having been celebrated for her 1910 success in Salomè, Borelli appears in exotic garb. On a subsequent page, in a little photograph, she is also shown as the only woman passenger inside a hot-air balloon. The caption below the image reads: "In love with strong emotions, after the flights of fancy, Lyda Borelli has decided to try the fantasy of flight, and she came back most enthusiastic from her nocturnal ascension." (10)

The photograph from La Donna of Borelli in a hot-air balloon makes it clear that the theater actress is the catalyst that puts to work the ten gentlemen standing around her. To a much greater extent than the hot air balloon, the airplane could twist and turn and thus revolutionize time and space, turning a linear path into a marvelous arabesque with loops and curves. What is most significant about the airplane fad, however, is not its cinematic mobilization of the point of view, but rather the secret it kept hiding underneath its wings. In fact, the diva and the airplane share a whole set of affinities. The diva even seems to live according to this new technology's extremes: she may crash, killing the enemy at the cost of killing herself; or she can fly beyond the constraints of her own body into a utopian realm. The airplane's ability to move between ground and sky matches the diva's oscillation between historical change and personal ruin. This parallel suggests that a newly born technology can house an older cultural type by way of a

metaphorical replacement or an unexpected analogy.

The combination of old and new transpires through the ambivalent and simultaneous backward and forward orientation of leaves and flowers in the art nouveau style. It is the curve that interests me in the construction of the film-diva as a cultural type. The curve is directionally a mixed form par excellence, which can split itself between the avant-garde and the backlash. Thus, the curve also echoes cinema's blurring of the boundaries between high culture and popular entertainment. This mixing of directions and levels can be assessed through two complementary processes at work in art nouveau itself: on one hand, the raising of minor arts to aesthetic ranking; on the other, the serializations and consequent lowering of icons from high culture into clichés for popular consumption.

Despite the serpentine line connecting the film-diva as art nouveau icon and the airplane as the symbol of space and time intertwined, outside the movie theater, the role of revived, successful Icarus remained a male prerogative. Women could not fit into the Icarus myth with the same degree of satisfaction because this tale's oedipal genealogy goes from father to son, not from mother to daughter. Furthermore, the problem was not just with storytelling, but with history itself. With the convulsions of hysteria keeping women on the margins of history, mothers and daughters could hardly find a good place for

themselves within a linear and teleological view of the historical process. (11) As a result of this double difficulty with the time-lines of both history and storytelling, women, or at least some of them, were perhaps dreaming of bending the rules into a new way of living when they looked at aerial twists on screen. In response to all sorts of skywriting, it is possible that female viewers might have been seeking a redefinition of femininity way beyond the gender-biased structures of the Icarus' myth. And it was especially by going to the cinema or to the airfield that they longed for the mobility of the aerial arabesque, the empty openness of the sky, and the freedom of flight.

Although a metaphorical view of aviation flourished among women in general, it is also true that the airplane fad was primarily a pastime for the upper classes. The flip-side of the diva's leaning towards abstraction can be found in another female star hidden at the very bottom of the airplane frenzy: Astrea, the woman athlete of a few action-adventure films. Her access to the screen derives from the popularity of airborne female acrobats in the circus of the times. Astrea embodies the disfigurative side of flying: grotesque and gynandrous, her oversized body bounces over enemies and dangers. Both Borelli and Astrea are transgressive women, but whereas the former's flight is an aesthetic gesture, the latter's jumps degrade her

femininity. As visual forms, the arabesque and the grotesque are comparable in that they perpetuate narrow views of femininity, for they demand either the complete denial of the sexual body or its exclusive use for reproduction. These respectively nonfigurative or disfigurative visual forms might have become popular due to the imaginative possibilities they released in whatever realm they appeared--in the circus, on the movie screen, in the myth of Icarus, and in the world of fashion.

In comparison to their European colleagues, Italian women climbed more slowly into the cockpit. It was not until the 1930s that the airplane was truly accessible to many of them. Even then, women fliers were usually aristocrats, intellectuals, or artists. For the record, the first Italian woman to earn a license as a civil pilot was Rosina Ferrario in 1913. Yet her achievement was so isolated that in 1928 the Almanacco della Donna Italiana forgot to mention Ferrario, and mistakenly assigned the record to Clelia Ferla, who flew for the first time fifteen years after Ferrario. In the wake of these two pioneers, Princess Miriam Potenziani, Contessa Bonmartini, Contessa Di Sanbuy, and the Marchesa Carina Negroe di Cambiaso went up into the air, whether alone or with a male partner is not clear. (12)

Moving from the historical record to the cinematic screen, we encounter the Baroness Troixmonde, or Filibus, the female air pirate played by a little-known actress, Cristina Ruspoli, in

the adventure film Filibus (1915), directed by Mario Roncoroni. She is a rocambolesque criminal who lives in a dirigible filled with silent, faceless male assistants in tight black skin-suits. At ease with all kinds of technological gadgets, including a heliograph (a sort of solar-powered telegraph), Filibus engages in four major activities: observing the whereabouts of her enemy, Detective Hardy, who is scheming against her on the earth below; traveling between the ground and the sky inside an elevator that looks like a moving can; operating ground technology to keep in touch with the dirigible hidden among the clouds; and swiftly assuming new identities by putting on different sets of clothing.

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Whenever she is not wearing one of her disguises, such as the sober tuxedo of "the dandy Count de La Brieve," Filibus appears with all the feminine accoutrements of her aristocratic class, including a large brimmed hat. This accessory not only quivers in the wind, but is also ornately trimmed with feathers—an elegant reminder of her avian "underground" activities. Even though this female pirate is competent on land and in the sky, and at home in the worlds of fashion and technology, she never manages to drive her Zeppelin household to a destination that belongs only to her. In a sense, Filibus enjoys Daedalus's technological ingenuity, but she never lands in Sicily.

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On the other hand, in real life, if an airplane was not easily available, any kind of reference to flying, even through fashion, was a statement of emancipation for the Italian woman. In Alberto Degli Abbatini's La Memoria dell'Altro (1914), the diva Lyda Borelli is a famous aviatrix whose flight is an endless source of fascination for the camera. With her supple acting style, wavy blonde hair, and liquid hand gestures, Lyda Borelli was considered by critics and fans alike the most D'Annunzian of all divas, the ultimate embodiment of the art nouveau arabesque. (13)

In La Memoria dell'Altro, the first part of the narrative deals with the success and courage of Lyda as a female pilot. Later on, this positive persona is set against another portrait of Lyda--a woman suffering and in isolation because she loves a married man, Mario. It is as if the diva were interpreting two different characters through one role: no better example could be found of how the "new woman" of modernity could live next to the mater dolorosa of Catholic iconography. To be sure, Lyda's commitment to Mario is "everlasting," so that it comes to resemble a blood-pact, a mother's attachment to her son.

La Memoria opens with a sequence at an airfield. As soon as she lands, a group of admiring men surrounds the beautiful Lyda, who is wearing pants and a pilot's beret. Lyda's outfit recalls

Pierrot's jupe-culotte, the first kind of loose pants available to city women for daily wear. According to the historian Michela De Giorgio, the very first Italian woman to wear pants in public appeared in Piazza San Carlo, Turin, in 1911. Of course, she caused an amazing stir. Apparently a few men addressed the woman so rudely that she was obliged to leave the street. (14)

A few days later, in Florence, Lyda Borelli was also photographed in a jupe-culotte; her choice of garment turned a social transgression into a trend-setting gesture. (15) This was, indeed, the power of the diva: in La Memoria dell'Altro, her character, also named "Lyda," chooses self-annihilation after her beloved Mario's death. In real life, however, the actress Lyda Borelli could get away with all sorts of eccentricities. The aviatrix's jupe-culotte also required a thin figure; therefore, for the first time, thousands of Italian women went on diets.

It is as if the cinema needed Borelli's special aura of celebrity to justify women's association not only with pants and thinness, but also with flying. Nevertheless the diva's avian identity is characterized by some major limitations. The aviatrix, for instance, becomes visible only when she has her feet on the earth. This limited representation of the woman-pilot at the controls is not exclusively due to technological limitations. It is true that in 1913, the film technology

necessary to shoot someone in an airplane from another vehicle also in flight was not readily available. Cameras were still heavy and awkward to handle. This is also why Roncoroni's Filibus depends so much on miniature models to depict landscape overviews, dirigibles, and hot-air balloons. In addition to these technological constraints, Borelli's grounding contains a hidden agenda: to delineate a woman's proper place, namely, either in front of a mirror or in the passenger's seat. This approach is not only inflected by gender, but also by class. When the aviatrix arrives at the airfield, she sits in the back of a car driven by a chauffeur.

It is only before her flight that the camera dwells on Lyda's dressing up. She carefully positions a pilot's beret on her head. The actress's precise little movements suggest her concern to continue to look feminine despite her unusual headgear. Thus, the "new woman" can be born only through male clothing, whereas the way to construct her image from a female point of view remains as vague as a breath of fresh air.

Despite the ideological limitations built into the character of Borelli's aviatrix, the partnership of airplanes and women in film is too anti-conformist to stop at just one episode. Here is an additional example where the costuming for an aerial dance about the cinema suggests that freedom thrives inside the metaphors of women's imagination, even though they

may not have access to the technology itself. My description of Giannina Censi's dance costume which contains allusions to the cinematic apparatus, as well as to airplanes, is based on several black-and-white photographs published by Claudia Salaris in her volume on aviation and Futurism. (16) In 1917 Marinetti wrote out directions for a performance entitled Danza dell'Aviatrice (The Aviatrice's Dance). In line with Marinetti's original approach, Giannina Censi danced on a brightly colored map of the world; on her bosom she wore a huge celluloid propeller, supposedly shaped like a flower to signify her gender, but also resembling a reel of film mounted on her projector-like body. On her head, Censi wore a white hat shaped like a monoplane. No photographic record exists of Censi performing Marinetti's 1917 choreography. In Claudia Salaris's book, however, the photographs of Censi dancing a comparable piece in 1931 suggest fluidity, especially when the dancer stretches her arm outward in a straight but non-aggressive line—a line that wants to be a wing instead of an arrow. The 1931 photographs indicate that Censi emphasized shape-shifting and plasticity, rather than virile penetration of soft clouds at sunset, which was the way Marinetti imagined the 1917 piece. Furthermore, in Censi's performance of 1931, the wing motif replaces Marinetti's 1917 airplane with its bellyful of bombs. This last example illustrates a woman dancer's power to move

beyond Marinetti's view of aviation as a masculine monopoly, or an expression of virility and violence.

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Yet another telling anecdote concerns Diana Karenne, who sought D'Annunzio's cooperation in order to take off into the sky of fantasy. (17) In 1918, as the representative of the Lega Aerea Nazionale (National Air League), an organization interested in producing a film about the heroism of Italian pilots, the diva Diana Karenne traveled to D'Annunzio's residence, Il Vittoriale, in Gardone Riviera, to plan such a project. Around that time, the poet was approaching the climax of his involvement with the airplane. Karenne's arrival is preceded by a suggestive telegram:

My soul is dreaming of becoming one of your women through the mystery of art STOP shall arrive on Sunday. From the living breath of your spirit I hope one of your [literary] creatures can be born in me STOP shall arrive in Desenzano at 10. (18)

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Here Karenne wishes to be reborn as a D'Annunzian fictional heroine for a tale of wings, technology, and erotic mystery. More important are the larger questions raised by this episode: What happens when a woman, the diva Diana Karenne, identifies with the sky diva of the movies and aspires to become an

aviatrix in a new film? Will she function as a fantasy icon for men, for women, or for both? Karenne's telegram seems to declare that her crossing over into the "new woman" of modernity depends on the way the dandy D'Annunzio creates ambiguous images of femininity in his literary work. It is as if Karenne, in real life, was stepping into the "clothes" of the historical spectators mesmerized by the D'Annunzian features of the film-diva Borelli in La Memoria dell'Altro. In order to find alternative avenues of expression for her desire, a woman (Karenne) identifies with a man (D'Annunzio), who, in turn, is attracted to androgynous heroines in order to reinvent himself as a male artist. Daedalus's labyrinth could hardly be more convoluted than Karenne's romantic connection with flight through D'Annunzio. In a sense he is Daedalus, the architect, and she is Ariadne, following the thread toward freedom either via divismo or via fashion.

Considering that both Marinetti and D'Annunzio either marginalized or used women to spur male creativity, the question remains: Which one of these two artists would have been more tolerable to fly with? Probably D'Annunzio, since Marinetti was more rigid in the matter of gender roles, more concerned with virility and less with androgyny. In La Memoria dell'Altro, Borelli's outfitting herself in men's clothes to pilot a plane does not oblige spectators to give up the heterosexual norm. Yet

it enables them to shed the clothing of rigid stereotypes, and perhaps to take on D'Annunzio's outlook on gender roles. With the film-diva, crossing over is not an intolerable transgression, because it immediately becomes an aesthetic choice, an avant-garde position, a fashion statement which receives its seal of approval from high-brow literary culture.

Flying in the Circus

Flying was not just an expensive pastime for the jet set of the day, a pack of socialites who crowded the balls and horse races, airfields and art openings. Flying, as performing in the air, was also a popular form of entertainment in the circus and in silent film comedy. Borelli in flight was not visible, but she posed, so to speak, in pilot's clothing, before taking off and after landing. By contrast, in silent film comedy and in the circus, the audience could actually admire women acrobats flipping in the air or performing stunts that required them to leap around.

The most famous female athlete in film was Astrea, a Venetian who had formerly been known as Countess Barbieri. A stage-name with cosmic implications, Astrea was also an alias for Queen Elizabeth during the English Renaissance. (19) Between 1910 and 1920, many Italian aristocrats were involved in the movies, but they rarely belonged to the world of the circus.

This popular, lower-class space of live performance was traditionally reserved for nomadic mountebanks. Little is known about Barbieri, except that she was so protective of her real name that she narrowed it down to a mysterious "Countess B." Although the title "Countess" lingered on in her private life, the way Astrea looked on screen--huge and grotesque--undeniably brought to mind circus freaks. And yet, as a result of an intriguing turn of events, stooping so low in terms of social class for the sake of a professional adventure in film became Astrea's ticket to stardom. Astrea was first discovered by the French comedian Fernand Guillaume Polidor (1887-1977). With him in the role of Birillo, she starred in four well-known action-comedies: I Creatori dell'Impossibile (1921), Justitia (1919), La Riscossa delle Maschere (The Masks' Counter-Attack) (1919), and L'Ultima Avventura (The Last Adventure) (1920). The gigantic Astrea and her small partner, shrewd and goofy, achieved success by playing off each other's sizes and by engaging in picaresque adventures across the world--two traits that are reminiscent of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza.

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It is most interesting that the aerial metaphor at work in Astrea's name can be stretched to include her gigantic look as well as the miniature size of Valentina Frascaroli, another star

of the comic genre whose screen name was "Farfalletta" (Little Butterfly). Frascaroli stands out as a minor star in the context of the adventure film. Furthermore, the parallel between Astrea and Farfalletta not only involves airy names, but also includes a similar generic placement in film comedy. Just as the gigantic Astrea paired up with Polidor, the minuscule Farfalletta developed her screen career next to André Deed (1884-1938). The male partners of both actresses are clownish creatures rather than good-looking men. In addition, Farfalletta is so small that she appears child-like, and unable to claim a woman's sexuality. On the contrary, Astrea's ballooning figure suggests the stereotype of the overwhelming mother, one who can never lose weight and therefore become an appealing wife or a seductive mistress.

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Besides Astrea, other athletic women started in the circus and went on to star on Italian screens. With the new name of Sansonette for the screen, Linda Albertini was originally a star of the circus, "an amazon of the air, and a dancer of the prairie." Along with her Danish colleague, Emilie Samson, who specialized in airplane stunts, Sansonette excelled in airborne acrobatics involving the trapeze, ropes, horses, and all sorts of flying vehicles. Finally, the aerial motif informed the career of Gisaliana Doria, whose films about war and aviation

turned her into an icon of courage, and helped her to become the female cinematic version of the heroic Italian pilot Francesco Baracca. (20) In 1914 the engineer Gianni Caproni built the first of eighty-nine bombers to be deployed in World War I. Five years later, Gisaliana Doria starred in the first Italian war film with a female heroine, Il Pilota del Caproni n.5 (1919).
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Abstraction and Disfiguration

The iconography of physical courage stretching from the muscle-bound female star to the arabesque-like, graceful persona of Borelli seems to indicate that these women of the air wanted to fly away from the confinements of a passive and domestic identity. In this respect, the diva joins ranks with Sansonette and her sisters: they all step outside the conventional roles of obedient wife and timid daughter. It is also true, however, that in comparison to Borelli's androgynous oscillation between nervous but sensual, and muscular but fragile, the strong women of Italian silent cinema are by far more statuesque and unidimensional icons of national health. Thus, when placed next to Karenne or Borelli, the airplane endows female desire with wings of self-expression, or at least with the possibility of it. By contrast, in the cases of Sansonette, Farfalletta, and Astrea, flying is more about dexterity, spectacle, and

entertainment. When Sansonette flies all the way to the top on her trapeze, her trajectory downward is both reassuring and predictable. By contrast, when Borelli disappears in the sky, the camera cannot show much, but only wonder about an unknown metamorphosis taking place below the level of clothing or beyond the female body, but definitely behind the clouds.

The semantic asymmetry between the diva and the woman athlete in relation to the theme of flying stems from the fact that the diva belongs to the unconscious, to the boudoir, to a vertically oriented oxymoron of simultaneously futuristic and arcane emotional experiences. In contrast to the diva's backstage location, Astrea and Sansonette happily occupy the façade of family life and national identity. They mobilize and energize the domestic psyche. Yet they do so by holding onto a horizontal axis of stability which reinforces a linear teleology, a historical trajectory compatible only with improvements and successes. Unlike these two cartoon-like strong women, the diva is a much more contradictory catalyst of repressed desires and an agent of destruction aimed at herself and at the status quo that surrounds her. (21)

Were we to take the comparison of Lyda and Astrea in terms of flying and the issue of class, and narrow its focus to the function of clothing and to the analogy between the art nouveau arabesque and Borelli's protean body, we would gain a much

clearer understanding of the changing gender roles at the beginning of the twentieth century. It is through these limits of representation that it is possible to infer what the audiences of those days imagined behind and beyond the visual forms they saw on screen. The comparison of Lyda with Astrea also makes us wonder whether the woman athlete is in any way like the male transvestite. Astrea is not a successful example of transsexuality, for the layering of female clothing on a successful male transvestite is usually meant to tone down the masculine contours of his muscles. Astrea's enlarged size does make her look like a female Maciste. Yet her large hips and beautiful face unmistakably prove that she is a gorgeous, oversize woman. On the other hand, Borelli's appearance as a male pilot is an appealing icon, an erotic teaser, as long as her metamorphosis stops at the clothes. If Lyda's female body was changed by her masculine outfit, or, to twist the proverb, if her clothes made the man, the diva's playful androgyny would degenerate into monstrous hermaphroditism--an aberrant mixture deep inside, instead of an intriguing layering on top.

When seen alone, Astrea is a large but striking woman. And yet there is something grotesque about Astrea's muscles towering over little Birillo. There they are: two freaks, two bodies engaged in a comedy of errors made by Mother Nature. She always wears the same male outfit--baggy pants, loose shirt, and a

wide-brimmed hat--and there is nothing else she can do: Astrea is just too big for a normal woman. Likewise, her tiny man, Birillo, is no dandy; he has lost his male status and has been reduced to either the child or a dwarf. This is why androgyny is too aristocratic a term for Astrea. By contrast, she is an example of gynandry (22), a word pointing to the populist reconciliation of high and low social classes. In this respect, Astrea's oversize body is a way of masking divisions which are difficult to bridge in a small, newly born nation.

It is also true that the grotesque, in the history of art, can be a manifestation of weightlessness; thus Astrea's oversized body engages in leaps and bounds and defies the law of gravity that should apply to a naturalistic space. (23) But her victory over the pull of the earth is not an event staged in the utopian and rule-free space of nowhere. Rather, her stunts are a temporary and extreme performance to straighten out a society which is undergoing radical change. (24) Within this changing world, stable binary oppositions such as male and female, heavy and light, risk turning into stunt-like reversals of values and roles. While she takes one risk after another, Astrea operates within a picture that remains safely figurative--that is, stable and anthropocentric--and does not dissolve into the blank slate of abstraction and revolution.

It is as if the action-cinema to which Astrea belongs was

made of topsy-turvy pictures where the potential for abstraction begins to show but is nevertheless pulled down by this role of superwoman in charge of maintaining the status quo. It is this sort of denial within the image itself that makes her figure look incongruously large. In other words, the size of her body overbears the architecture shown in the film--namely, the small portions of roofs and chimneys that are set against the open sky--as she chases the evildoers, jumping into the air and sailing from one building to the next. This discrepancy in scale between the protagonist's size and the sets suggests that the fundamental rule of anthropocentric painting--man is the measure of all things--is distorted, but not overcome, by a woman. On the contrary, Astrea's body bears witness to the deformation of appearance in store for women who dare to leave their social class and domestic space as Countess B. left her Venetian palace. Paradoxically, Astrea's large size is about the relapse into an image of traditional female reproduction, combined with the social stigma of monstrosity.

If androgyny means "more than one" gender, to the point of promising a quasi-magic, fluid persona, an arabesque-like body shape, then Borelli embodies an androgynous ideal of bipolarity. This ideal could be adopted by men and women alike, as long as they remained within a privileged milieu. In contrast to androgyny's "more than one," gynandry is not about sliding

oneself out of one's own mold to become someone else. Rather, it stands for an abnormal male element weighing heavily inside a normative female vessel. When seen as a punitive pregnancy without delivery, gynandry is not only a populist solution rooted within a working-class stereotype but, in a psychoanalytic sense, a sort of Oedipus interruptus that risks breaking the metonymic chain between father and son.

{Figure 4.11 here}

Where men and women are concerned, the semiotic transferability of androgyny is broader than the semantic adjustment of aviation; it is easier for women to dress like male pilots than to actually fly. By putting on modern clothes, women display their desire for inner change as well. This dynamic of surface replacing depth speaks to the association of the vertical line with modernity through its most famous icon, the American skyscraper, so vehemently celebrated by the Futurist Fortunato Depero. (25) Whereas women can translate themselves into the clothing of masculinity, men follow an imperative not to cross-dress, for such a transgression would irreversibly destroy their masculine appearance. Yet, in comparison to women, men have a greater chance to experience flying in the first person, as pilots. It is ironic, however, that androgyny applied to transportation is more transitional--that is, reversible--for women than for men, because women, who

are the most transitional in terms of fashion, are also less mobile in society. And mobility is at the heart of the airplane and the cinema.

On the other hand, the slimming down of the androgynous body is closer to an anti-anthropomorphic abstract mode than to the eugenic, pro-creational expansion of female form achieved through Astrea's gynandry. (26) The latter is a form of biological reproduction outside industrial production, a reminder of women's ability to give birth by housing another body inside one's own. Androgyny is more about suggestions, intuitions, leaps, layers, and hints. Astrea's gynandry, by contrast, celebrates physical might, thus it stands for massive accumulation of force, expansion, serialization, and incorporation. As a visual form, androgyny would look odd in a populist or colonial or family narrative, where the emphasis would be on rigid sexual, class, and racial roles. In conjunction with flying, androgyny means abandoning one's own heavy shape to the earth in order to experience a metaphysical transition or corporeal transfiguration to the extreme of masochist self-effacement and to the point of veering toward the divine. Such a process of self-evacuation is antithetical to gynandry's embodiment. And, in the context of Catholic Italian culture, what could be the cultural model of this bodyless, non-sequential, anti-oedipal leap into abstraction?

Within the Italian visual culture of the silent period, the strongest term of reference available to the more or less androgynous and arabesque-like film diva was the mystical iconography of the Baroque. The undulating silhouette-in-jouissance of Bernini's Saint Theresa matched the serpentine line of the art nouveau arabesque as well as the convulsions of the diva's hysterical acting style. In his compilation film, Lyrical Nitrate (1991), Dutch filmmaker Peter Delpout manipulates the speed of Borelli's acting style in Malombra so that he is able to show with great precision the process of a physical upheaval, which Bernini's sculpture conveys through the draped cloth. It is also interesting to note that a religious subtext of self-denial informs journalist Ester Danesi Traversari's account of her first flight over Rome. Publishing her impressions in the pages of La Donna (1921), she wrote:

Everything seems incredibly small, forsaken, lost during our physical elevation which nearly resembles a spiritual one. This is perhaps what death is like, death which is always near all of us, but we do not feel it, vibrating as we are from this unparalleled joy of flying. (27)

{Figure 4.12 a,b here}

The Virgin Mary's holy body gets to fly because it is asexual and hence angelic. In this case, masochism as mysticism wins over the fulfillment of sexual desire. It also defeats the

dream of flying which Sigmund Freud associated with the discovery of sexuality in the dream-work. (28) Traversari's remarks are mostly introspective, and she only briefly touches on why the landscape engages her. Even then, her words are more metaphorical than accurate: the smallness of things down there reminds her of how frail mankind is, and her joy, in the end, is like that of a soul traveling towards Paradise. In conclusion, the airplane, within film culture, functioned like a palimpsest-object: The film diva was hidden behind its extremes of freedom and death, and Saint Theresa was hidden behind the diva's extremes of self-destruction and love everlasting.

While it is certainly true that the film diva as a cultural type appropriates her outward-directed destructive force from the femme fatale of the nineteenth century, it is also important to remember that crashing during flight could be seen as an odd demonstration of will-to-power, though one with a negative, masochistic coefficient. And, in some cases the will-to-power stored in the airplane fad was an opportunity for the "new woman" of modernity to express her enjoyment of life and her self-consciousness about a negative agency--a form of active subjectivity notwithstanding. This kind of willful memento mori, positive voice can be found in Sibilla Aleramo's "Il Mio Primo Viaggio Aereo" (1925). Aleramo, one of the most famous and openly feminist writers in early twentieth-century Italy,

described a flight she made in 1920 from Le Bourget airfield, near Paris, to Croydon, borough of London. She writes:

Only three passengers on board: we were three women. . . .
The world. Light areas, dark areas. Subdivisions and quasi-childish, elementary categories. Even time is suspended. Light, a huge light. Behind me the pilot, who knows the invisible way. The ship bounces up and down and has its own jarring song, as if it were giving rhythm to whatever we bring into space, our powers and our frailties. . . . The cruel life, life overflowing with bitterness, where justice and transcendence exist, yes, but too often they are veiled by our tears and by our fatigues, life on that day, up in the sky, a thing made of air, something that a trifle could have blown away, scatter in the happy, azure mists, without regrets, life was something tenuous but imbued with an infinite grace. . . . Thus, if we cannot be sure about anything, if the most beautiful things, which have just happened, can look like ephemeral figments of the imagination, why should we worry about tomorrow's countenance? (29)

In contrast to Traversari's inward gaze and somewhat mournful tone, Aleramo actively enjoys her ephemeral and minimalist landscape. The feminist Italian writer wants to rise above the mundane details of a life based on subordination. She shuns

Traversari's language of finitude and sublimation, and instead celebrates lightness as a form of infinite freedom, seeing as the mobile view of things passing.

Metaphor and Metonymy

The deployment of mysticism as a model of femininity (30) suggests that Italian women struggled to move forward, while they dreamt of flying upward. From the point of view of social emancipation, their choice was not much of a choice. In fact, the visual forms available at the time--the grotesque and the arabesque--spelled out two options: either femininity was a non-human, almost bestial identity, or it was a flight to a religious heaven, a sort of saintly death. (31) Significantly, the film diva's avoidance of gynandry as figurative enlargement, and her choice of androgyny as extreme downsizing, was based on a "negative" economy of metaphorical replacement through loss, absence, and lightness rather than on a "positive" lawful regime of metonymical appropriation through gain, accumulation, and conquest. (32)

To be sure, the oedipal subtext of the tale of Icarus and Daedalus, just like the airplane as seen by Marinetti and D'Annunzio, was a metonymical way of mastering time and space and of claiming a masculine monopoly on modernity. Of course, the metonymic chain includes the airplane, which was an

extension of the cinematic mobilization of looking. But, due to her operatic and consequently pre-modern roots, the diva's iconography of flying is neither compatible with modernist technological metaphors, nor applicable to metonymies about twentieth-century industrialization. Borelli's jupe-culotte in La Memoria dell'Altro, for instance, was an extension of the male pilot's outfit brought to the female body, but it became fashionable because it also recalled the traditional Pierrot costume from the pre-modern days of the commedia dell'arte. The jupe-culotte established itself as an acceptable garment for women's daily wear, and not just for female pilots, because it was the most skirt-like pair of pants conceivable at the time. This argument finds confirmation in L'Histoire d'un Pierrot (1914), a story with a lesbian subtext of the love between Lisette (Leda Gys) and Francesca Bertini in the title role, who elegantly wears the jupe-culotte. Except for the death of Lisette's beloved bird, there is no other avian reference in this pantomime staged in a timeless, arcadian setting. The bird, however, plays a crucial role in the narrative, for his death marks the crisis in the marriage of Lisette and Pierrot. Hence the bird can be seen as a veiled metaphor of sexual flight which bonds the two characters.

{Figure 4.13 here}

{Figure 4.14 here}

On the whole, the theme of femininity in flight amounted to an utterly anti-technological, quasi-therapeutic imagery of veils, feathers, and butterflies, of the winged sphinx and the rising phoenix. Even Gustave Moreau's famous Salomè (1876), a major source of inspiration for the cruel femme fatale, had a pair of little wings attached to her feet when she was dancing on tiptoe at the court of Herod. The following example about the re-inscription of aerial iconography into a pre-modern register is meant to further demonstrate the continuity of aerial imagery from Orientalist fin-de-siècle painting to early Italian cinema. Toward the end of Giovanni Pastrone's Tigre Reale (1916), Countess Natka (Pina Menichelli) lies dead. While her lover mourns the beautiful Russian aristocrat, a huge fire breaks out in the Grand Hotel, where the couple was having their secret and final tryst. The flames invade the screen, and for a while everything seems lost; the flames seem to predict the lovers' condemnation to hell. And yet a utopian fantasy of romantic love prevails at the end. It becomes clear that, just like Shakespeare's Juliet, the diva only appeared to be dead, due to the effect of a special drug. Reborn like a phoenix, the bird of eternal youth, she rises again and embraces her mate.

This pre-modern, fantastic approach, of course, ranges from the arabesque to the grotesque extreme. Pina Menichelli's bizarre owl-like headdress in Giovanni Pastrone's Il Fuoco

(1915) and Ida Rubinstein's vulture-like motions as Basiliola in La Nave (1921) show how the arabesque of birds flying out into the freedom of an abstract design can turn into the grotesque incorporation of birdlike features, expressed by the strikingly elongated body of Basiliola, the ultimately super-thin female vamp and killer of men. Likewise, Menichelli, in Il Fuoco, seems to emerge out of the bushes like a predatory bird. In La Nave--a monotone and nationalistic tirade directed by D'Annunzio's son, Gabriellino--the dancer Ida Rubinstein is all beak and bony arms and legs, with a body as angular as the arrows she uses to kill a group of scantily clad, sexy male prisoners, trapped inside a pit. Their frenzied gestures are competitive and attention-seeking. Their behavior suggests that they both welcome Basiliola's cruelty, and beg her for mercy. The sadomasochistic subtext of this scene in La Nave echoes Rubinstein's famous performance in the ballet Saint Sebastian (1911), by Claude Debussy, a text where the arrow is an instrument of both pleasure and pain.

{Figure 4.15 here}

In the sequential, teleological increase of metonymy, the airplane is only one element in a long list of new, interrelated inventions, including the cinema. Metaphor, instead, requires the erasure of one image (woman, for example), which is in turn replaced by or transformed into another (the butterfly). The

butterfly stands for the flight into a new sense of self. Here, the butterfly is an alternative to, or substitute for the airplane, because the new technology is not easily accessible to women. This is to say that metaphor and metonymy are not unrelated, but metaphor emphasizes a mental twist conducive to metamorphosis, at the expense, if need be, of logical, consecutive development; whereas metonymy underscores a historically grounded linear movement from one stage to the next. Veils, feathers, butterflies do not mark a logical progression from one stage to the next; they are only exchangeable and equivalent aerial images. With metaphor, imaginative, analogical associations win out over the causal, rational links of metonymy. In a word, pre-modern iconography fulfills wishes for achievements that are still unattainable, even in the modern present.

One very complex anti-modern or pre-modern example of aerial imagery used as a metaphor for children's toys occurs in Carmine Gallone's Maman Poupée (1919), starring his wife, the diva Soava Gallone. In this film, the diva plays an unhappily married woman who draws comfort from her children's miniature world of little houses, streets, rivers, lakes, and villages. By mimicking a human universe, the miniature scale of toys is also the way things look from the pilot's cockpit as the airplane surveys the land below. As long as the modern technology of

flight is linked to childhood and the imaginative power of a children's garden-party, Maman Poupée enjoys the aerial point of view. In Gallone's Maman Poupée, the toy-like miniature village is replaced by the real size of people and things when the observer's feet are on the ground. Yet this abrupt return to a human size happens exactly when Maman Poupée spells out her predicament as an unhappy wife caught in the drudgery of domesticity. She becomes a moving life-size doll. An old-fashioned technology often used or depicted by artists from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, the automaton as a sort of sculpture-in-motion fits Maman Poupée, who turns into a metaphor of overwhelming private despair. By contrast, her previous aerial point of view on the children's miniature world stands for a utopian, but only temporary, space of innocence and play.

(33)

In Maman Poupée, Gallone's iconography is doubly misogynist because the airplane is a positive image but an unviable one for an adult woman, and because the automaton is an outdated technology that discloses the wife's problems in her present life. In either case, in scenes taking the aerial point of view and in the automaton sequence, Gallone's approach is metaphorical and associational, poetic rather than expository. It is as if the director's choice of iconography, whether it is futuristic or pre-modern, is at odds with the possibility of

linear narration. By virtue of the chiasmus-like structure of her negative associations with technology, Maman Poupée's predicament indicates that both the future and the past are arrayed against the female protagonist in the present.

The diva-film's metaphorical rerouting of the future into the past, however, is a two-way street which can also become a bypass around modernity as present history for the sake of a postmodern visionary approach. This is why a scenario of postmodern utopian rebirth through pre-modern imagery appears at the end of Nino Oxilia's Rapsodia Satanica (1917). At the end of this film, Borelli wears a long, loose-fitting dress made of gauzy material with wing-like sleeves. Instead of looking like a phoenix, she brings to mind a newly born butterfly emerging out of a constricting cocoon. A small figure in the distant background, she walks through the huge door of her villa. Framed by the camera from below, Borelli's size gradually increases as she moves forward, toward the beginning of a new day, a new identity beyond history. She has regenerated herself into a third being, an alternative to the previous two stereotypes: the evil seducer who is young, sexual, and dangerous, and the aging diva who is grotesque and full of anger at her inability to defy time. Here Borelli is no longer a stereotype. She is not just "woman" any more, but has become a person in full--and also a paradox, a person with no body, no weight. (34)

{Figure 4.16 here}

What can studying the silent film-diva in the light of the new woman and the airplane teach us about the history of visual forms such as the arabesque and the grotesque--some of them leaning toward metaphor, others toward metonymy--and their relation to processes of historical change? In this essay, the curve of art nouveau, of the airplane, of the diva's acting style is nothing but a form of replacement, an imaginative twist of mind usually called "metaphor," a looping outline of substitutions set against the step-by-step sequence of metonymies, of chronologies, and of stories in search of a final goal for the male hero. The curve as metaphor is the only possible revitalizing and rewriting force of the Icarus myth, for the wing itself curves during flight. A "new" Icarus replaces the young, dead son and the old, wise father, thus enabling the airplane's popular success among men and women at the turn of the century. And this "new" Icarus, neither father nor son, is also the airborne, secret messenger of women's hopes for the future, for a time of new roles outside the realm of the patriarchal family and oedipal genealogies.

Historical change, when it comes to gender roles, is hardly ever, only, and exclusively linear, generational, or oedipal, and metonymical in a visual sense. That is, it rarely happens as a singular, direct transit from old to new. Rather, linear

change is often mixed with transformations and transfigurations, so that the figurative element, or the normative and figurative unit of measure, is taken over by abstraction or by some kind of anti-linear rerouting to the point that space and time become interchangeable. This rerouting, then, is made of replacement images or metaphors, together with development-images or metonymies. But the replacement-image is more powerful than any other image, for it is about both the disintegration of earthbound labyrinths, while it enjoys the famous circularity of heavenly spheres. In other words, it is comparable to the metaphysical presence of an absence and, as such, it is like an ephemeral, extra-corporeal leap forward into a lingering shadow left behind by the past.

Notwithstanding the imaginative power of metaphors, the air-bound, vertical yearning of the Italian modern experience found in the diva's curvilinear acting style only the initial stages of a much longer and more difficult liberating process that was not to take place in its entirety. In comparison to the Futurists' visionary leaps into some kind of reinvented cosmos, Asta Nielsen's use of the vertical line endowed the female image on screen with depth and interiority at the basic level of daily life. Furthermore, the Danish film star did so in ways so explicit and profound that the Italian diva's shifty silhouette could only invoke, but never match Nielsen's psychological

intensity. In the diva-film, due to a confusion with mystical upheaval and heavenly yearnings, the theme of verticality lost its élan vital, while it acquired a radicalism more in tune with a regressive loss of self into suffering and anger.

Notes to Chapter 4

- 1) On the cinema, the airplane, and subjectivity, see Paul Virilio, War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception. On the cinema and the train, see Lynne Kirby, Parallel Tracks: The Railroad and Silent Cinema. On airplanes in Italian popular culture, see Piero Botto, "Emilio Salgari e l'Aereonautica," in Emilio Salgari: Documenti e Testimonianze (1939), pp. 154-160. An excellent source on aviation and European culture is Robert Wohl, A Passion for Wings: Aviation and the Western Imagination.
- 2) The Versailles Treaty (1919) prohibited Germany from developing an air force of its own. By contrast, Italy produced the first theoretician of the air, General Giulio Douhet. Born in Caserta in 1869, Douhet began to write in 1909. In his major book, Il Dominio dell'Aria (1921), translated over and over again in several languages, he argued that the air force was so new a weapon that it was best to develop it independently of the army or the navy. This insight proved to be wrong because, during World War II, coordination became the name of the game. In addition, among the armed forces, Douhet maintained that the airplane marked the beginning of total war, where combat was taken beyond the battlefield and the trenches into the cities and the factories. He was especially interested in the use of

bombing campaigns to break down the morale of the civilian population. Unfortunately, Douhet's second theory was well received by Hermann Goering (1893-1946), who organized Nazi Germany's Luftwaffe, and by the American Curtis E. LeMay (1906-1990), who oversaw the bombing of Hiroshima. Douhet's name also remains attached to the tragedies of Guernica and Dresden, and, most of all, to Hitler's Battle of Britain.

- 3) Luigi Pirandello, Shoot! Notebooks of Serafino Gubbio, Cinematograph Operator, p. 71.
- 4) Luigi Pirandello, Shoot!, p. 71.
- 5) Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Mafarke le Futuriste: Romain Africain (Paris: Sansot, 1910). This is not the only work where Marinetti turns to the airplane; in fact, the explosion of the fad happens in the 1930s with Futurist aerial painting and aerial poetry. Other relevant works by Marinetti are: The Monoplane of the Pope (1911); The Bombing of Adrianapolis (1912), written during the Libyan Campaign; and L'Aereopoema del Golfo di La Spezia (1937). Canto Uomini e Macchine della Guerra Mussoliniana (1940) was written before Marinetti left for the Russian front and is dedicated to two famous aviators, Italo Balbo and Bruno Mussolini. Finally, shortly before he died, Marinetti wrote one more piece: L'Aereopoema di Cozzarini, Primo Eroe dell'Esercito Repubblicano. On the place of the airplane in

- futurist iconography, see Enrico Crispolti, Il Mito della Macchina ed Altri Temi del Futurismo (1969); and Enrico Falqui, Bibliografia ed Iconografia del Futurismo (1988).
- 6) Gabriele D'Annunzio published Forse Che Si, Forse Che No in 1910; the whole novel is about aviation and an erotic quadrangle. See Gabriele D'Annunzio, Forse Che Si, Forse Che No, introduced by Federico Roncoroni (1982). Valuable information about D'Annunzio and the airplane can be found in Robert Wohl, A Passion for Wings; in Tommaso Antongini, D'Annunzio (1938); and Massimo Cardillo, Tra Le Quinte del Cinematografo, 122-23.
 - 7) Dario Cecchi, Corè: Vita e Dannazione della Marchesa Casati, pp. 84-86.
 - 8) On Marinetti, metaphors, and women, see Cinzia Sartini Blum, The Other Modernism: F.T. Marinetti's Futurist Fiction of Power.
 - 9) Edith Hamilton, Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes, pp. 139-40.
 - 10) Nino G. Caime, "Personalità Femminili della Scena Italiana: Lyda Borelli," La Donna (Turin) (5 February 1911), p. 19.
 - 11) Michela De Giorgio, Le Italiane dall'Unità ad Oggi: Modelli Culturali e Comportamenti Sociali, pp. 253-259.
 - 12) De Giorgio, Le Italiane, pp. 209-53.
 - 13) Fausto Montesanti, "La Parabola della Diva," Bianco e Nero

- 13:7-8 (July-August 1952), pp. 55-72.
- 14) De Giorgio, Le Italiane, pp. 209-53. On fashion and flying, see: Karla Jay, "No Bumps, No Excrescences: Amelia Earhart's Failed Flight into Fashions," in On Fashion, eds. Shari Benstock and Suzanne Ferris, pp. 76-94.
- 15) De Giorgio, Le Italiane, pp. 209-53.
- 16) Claudia Salaris, Aero...: Futurismo e mito del volo, p. 90.
- 17) This contact between Karenne and D'Annunzio is documented in the archives of Il Vittoriale--the poet's incredibly luxurious villa on Lake Garda in Northern Italy. On D'Annunzio's androgynous women and ventriloquist dandies, the best source is Barbara Spackman, Decadent Genealogies: The Rhetoric of Sickness from Baudelaire to D'Annunzio.
- 18) (Diana Karenne) "Lega Aerea Nazionale," Archivio Generale LXV, 4, Il Vittoriale degli Italiani, Gardone Riviera, Italy.
- 19) Frances A. Yates, Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century.
- 20) Marcello Berti, Francesco Baracca: Una Vita per il Volo. Readers with a special interest in Astrea and all her colleagues, should see Alberto Farassino and Tatti Sanguineti, "Amazzoni dell'Aria e Danzatrici della Prateria," in Gli Uomini Forti; on Justitia (1919), Astrea's most important film, see The Bioscope (London) (4

- January 1920); on "La Farfalletta," see I Comici del Muto Italiano, eds. Paolo Cherchi Usai and Livo Jacob, pp. 42-43.
- 21) Astrea and her sisters fulfill a eugenic ideal. On the popularization of this female type, see the very humorous novelette by Edmondo De Amicis, Amore e Ginnastica (1892).
- 22) For the term "gynandry," see Cynthia Secors, "Androgyny: An Early Reappraisal," Women's Studies 2 (1974), pp. 161-69. On androgyny and flying, see Naomi Ritter, "Art and Androgyny: The Aerialist," Studies in Twentieth-Century Literature 13: 2 (Summer 1989), pp. 173-93. On the grotesque, see Mary Russo, The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess and Modernity, pp. 17-51; and Wolfgang Kayser, The Grotesque in Art and Literature.
- 23) Kayser, The Grotesque in Art and Literature, pp. 33 and 39.
- 24) Mary Russo, in The Female Grotesque, is right in associating the grotesque with risk and stunt rather than with utopia and performance, or metamorphosis and freedom. The equivalent of this connection between risk and modernity, but through the "stunt" of gambling reduced to the throw of the dice, is discussed by Mary Ann Doane, "The Erotic Barter: Pandora's Box," in Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis, pp. 142-162.
- 25) On New York City and Fortunato Depero, see: Serena Aldi,

- "Depero e Il Cinema," Unpublished Thesis, University of Udine, 2000.
- 26) The connection between procreation and eugenic theory is especially strong in the work of Paolo Mantegazza (1831-1910): see The Sexual Relations of Mankind.
- 27) De Giorgio, Le Italiane, p. 259. De Giorgio's end note n. 343, p.15, indicates: Ester Danesi-Traversari, "A Volo, su Roma," La Donna 17 (5 February 1921). Also on a miniature world seen from an aerial point of view, see: Susan Stewart, On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection.
- 28) On dreams and flying, with case studies involving male as well as female patients, see Sigmund Freud, The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud, ed. A.A. Brill, pp. 356-57.
- 29) Sibilla Aleramo, "Il Mio Primo Viaggio Aereo (1925)," in Gioie d'Occasione (Milan: Mondadori, 1930), pp. 45-53.
- 30) On mysticism , see: Annarita Buttafuoco, "Vite Esemplari. Donne del primo Novecento," in Svelamento, p. 153: "The mystical coefficient of some models proposed by women at the beginning of the century is well-known: it is not a coincidence that figures such as Ersilia Maino or Alessandra Ravizza, whether they liked it or not, were commonly defined 'lay saints.' It was not just a formula that was paying homage to their extraordinary commitment

with ill and poor people, but it was making apparent the perception of a sort of religious halo stemming from their personality. In writing to Ersilia Maino and comparing her to the Madonna of Seven Pains, Maria Montessori adds: 'that your figure is shrouded in religiosity and inspires a religious feeling as well, it is certainly true.' On the other hand, Alessandra Ravizza was called Madonna of the Poor."

- 31) Georges Bataille, Erotism: Death and Sensuality, trans. Mary Dalwood. On women mystics see: Caroline Walker Bynum, Holy Feast, Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women (1987); Cristina Maria Mazzoni, "Virgin Births and Hysterical Pregnancies: Neurosis and Mysticism in French and Italian Literature at the Turn of the Century," Unpublished Ph.D Dissertation, Yale University, Comparative Literature, 1991; Angela Dalle Vacche, "Still Life and Feminine Space," in Cinema and Painting: How Art is Used in Film, pp. 221-45; and Nick Mansfield, Masochism: The Art of Power.
- 32) For an excellent discussion on gender and modernity based on well-circumscribed case studies and on cultural theory, mostly relevant to England and France, see Rita Felski, The Gender of Modernity.
- 33) Horst Bredekamp, "The Question of Movement: Sculpture and

Machine," The Lure of Antiquity and the Cult of the Machine, pp. 1-9.

- 34) Giovanni Lista, Loie Fuller, Danseuse de la Belle Époque. In Claude Chabrol's film, Rien ne va plus (The Swindle) (1997), a dance performance with sticks and veils is extremely reminiscent of Loie Fuller's method, in that the body of the dancer completely disappears into waves of movement.