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Torino Is My Town

by

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Fine Arts in Film Production

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Abstract

Elena is 20 years old. Born in Italy to an Italian mother and an American father she grew up in Rochester, New York and she is currently living in New York City. Like any American kid she is a mix of different cultures, but her Italian roots are very well grounded in her soul. In the summer of 2013, she traveled with her mother to Torino, the town where her mother grew up and the place about which she has always heard many stories. This thesis film will demonstrate that Elena and her mother's trip is not just a geographical discovery, it is a walk through memories as well as a coming of age experience. Through Elena’s eyes we will discover present day Torino, juxtaposed with the Torino her mother has told her about, the city she loved and hated when she was the same age that Elena is now. These women from two different generations will bond in the process and discuss the cultural identity, and the socio-political make up of this city through the poetic perspective of the mother and her stories of the city soccer club, the punk music scene, and the local love for cinema.
Introduction

Artist Statement
I made this film because my daughter asked me about the punk music scene in my hometown at a time in which I was coming back to it on my own. The coincidence of our interests made me reflect on my past and I wanted to explore it so that I could explain it to her. This opportunity seemed to develop organically as I was on my own starting to rekindle acquaintances of my past in my hometown and was met again by then already quite a few of my friends from my youth. The inquiry of that my daughter posed was more than one question to me: what was it exactly that pushed me to leave Italy? I was not an emigrant due to necessity neither I was pursuing a specific career abroad. Did I make peace with my past? How much did I change from those times? Will I be able to find my place back in my city?

I am interested in ethnographic and narrative documentary for the most part, but I needed to take a leave and refocus with a poetic piece to better find my voice, and it seemed very organic to go back to my roots. It seemed very appropriate as I was approaching the end of my study of the medium to ascertain of my technical abilities and push my self to learn better what I had not have the time to explore fully. As a full time working mother, the balance of my creative expression with daily life and family has been demanding and I know that I did not have the opportunity to deepen my understanding of photography, which it has been a true passion since my twenties.

In preparation for the project, I talked at length with my daughter, and with others in Torino who I met at the time, about punk music and then began to start shaping the narrative. I took on the full production myself as I felt the need to explore the media in a fully independent modality, not just for the learning experience but to also embrace the punk philosophy and aesthetic. So
aligned with such an attitude, I took my camera and went. I did it in spite of my small budget, relatively limited experience with the Canon 5D, and limited control of sound. My work in general relates to what is happening in Italy right now. There has been exponential growth in documentary filmmaking there, and it is curious that I came to work in a similar fashion after having lived in the United States for almost eighteen years. I am satisfied with it to the extent that it is a work in progress that is in flux and just a start. Having said this, the process has taught me another lesson in documentary filmmaking: one should always approach subjects with a high level of respect. Turning the camera on myself made me humble in the approach and open to take in even more of what comes to me unexpectedly from humanity.
Chapter 1

Inspiration

The style of all my work finds its roots in Italian Neorealism, Roberto Rossellini, Cesare Zavattini, Beppe De Santis and from documentary tradition established after World War Two by Vittorio De Seta on the other all the way to the New Millennium Italian Narrative Documentary from Mimmo Calopresti and Roberta Torre.¹ Neorealism’s documentary approach makes the

¹ Born a Calabrian nobleman, Vittorio De Seta came into contact with those he calls the "subordinate people" as a POW during World War Two. His documentaries, shot in southern Italy, Sardinia and Sicily, have focused on the lives of shepherds, miners and fishermen. His semi-fiction film, Bandits of Orgosolo, about Sardinian shepherds whom circumstances force into banditry, has been lauded "worthy to take its place in the pantheon of the greatest masterpieces of documentary filmmaking." The epic tones of these films record the collective voice of a world that is being lost even as it is filmed. In the new millennium, after decades of silence, De Seta was a vibrant, enthusiastic man in his eighties back at work on a documentary about clandestine African.

http://tribecafilm.com/filmguide/archive/512ce3bc1c7d76e046000b21-detour-de-seta

Mimmo Calopresti, Born in Polistena, Italy, in 1955, Mimmo Calopresti won the Young Cinema award at the Turin International Festival for his 1985 short film. (What is the short film called?) Between 1987 and 1994 he directed a series of documentaries for the Workers Movement’s audiovisual archives. These films included 1943: The Choice, 43-43, and Peace and Liberty. He worked for the RAI television network from 1991 to 1992. He made three feature films throughout his career and all three were presented in the Canne’s Official Selection. In 1996, The Second Time (La Seconda Volta) was entered and would go on to win the award for the Best Feature at the Chicago International Film Festival. In 1998, Notes of Love (La Parlooa Amore Esiste) was chosen for the Directors Fortnight and was awarded the Nastro d’Argento Prize for Best Original Screenplay. Finally in 2000, Preferisco il Rumore del Mare (I Prefer the Sound of the Sea) was presented in Un Certain Regard.

http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mimmo_Calopresti

Roberta Torre was born in Milan. After studying philosophy, she attended the Milan Film School and the Paolo Grassi Dramatic Arts Academy. In 1991 she began to make short films that were often awarded at Italian and international festivals. Though inspired by a form close to documentary and anthropological research, Torre’s directing is often stylistically close to that of stage direction, one that combines a bent for the portrait with a special sensitivity to the musical element in film. Lost Kisses is her fifth feature film. Rossi Dramatic Arts Academy. In 1991 she began to make short films that were often awarded at Italian and international festivals. Though inspired by a form close to documentary and anthropological research, Torre’s directing is often stylistically close to that of stage direction, one that combines a bent for the portrait with a special sensitivity to the musical element in film. Lost Kisses is her fifth feature film.

http://www.cinema.indiana.edu/?post_type=series&p=4528

² Dave Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, Film Art, New York, MacGraw Hill, 2010, p.418. “In this respect Bazin and Ayfre echoes the ideas of Cesare Zavattini, De Sica’s scriptwriter and the most tireless advocate of a distinctive Neorealist aesthetic. Zavattini sought a cinema which presented the drama hidden in everyday events.”
viewer aware of the beauty in ordinary life. It is often incorrectly portrayed as the cinema using non-actors filmed in rough locations. Andrè Bazin believes the opposite and correctly reframed this element as the “amalgam technique” (Thompson and Bordwell, 419), whereby non-actors are mixed professional actors, such as Anna Magnani, to create a filmmaking style with no less artifice than other film approaches. A common thread can be traced that connects the Neorealist stance to the New Millennium filmmakers. Both Calopresti and Torre are part of this tradition and both directors work in fiction and documentary filmmaking, where the latter form often informs the pure narrative creation. It surprises and pleases me that my focus on ‘reality’ even once removed from Italy, is similar to not just Torre and Calopresti but also to the growing trend in Italian filmmaking. It brings to light that we are all placing such reality under scrutiny as the feats of the last 2 decades of Berlusconi ‘regime’ or at international level, as far as I am concerned, the uncontrolled growth of neo-liberalist policies and practices suggests a path of resistance. If the ‘mother’ of the Neorealism had been the Italian Spring of ‘Resistance War’, now the ‘mother’ of New Italian filmmaking in Italy and abroad is ‘resistance war’ we are fighting against uncontrolled globalization and cultural homologation. Talking about identity and preserving ethnicity has become our way to refocus and oppose this growing trend.

All my documentaries are tied to a discourse of ethnicity, identity, and culture that I have encountered in my lifetime. I find that reenactment or even artificial construction of a scene is a legitimate means of further representation of “reality.” In this sense, my approach is a hybrid of styles.

With all this said, it is of the upmost importance that one respects the subject(s) engaged in the process. The process should make a social change possible for those who take part. If we abide
by Zavattini’s theory on the ‘pursuit of reality’ (Thompson and Bordwell, 418), we are also taking responsibility for our presence in such reality. Therefore, we should not come in empty handed. We need to exchange and be open to change ourselves throughout the process. While I had certainty on my personal changes during this process, I was not sure what impact I could have on such a small scale project. As soon as, my Virgil and guide in the community introduced me to the soccer subjects, for example, I started thinking that the best service was to provide the footage to the participants to use for the Toro club or personal use such as family memoirs. I thought that in the future I also would like to present the work for Toro and continue this initial conversation. To this day I am in touch with the subjects and I think we established long-term relationships. As for the filmmakers, who are long time friends, I was not too worried about establishing a real bond and exchange, since we collaborated many times on projects; I appreciated greatly how both welcomed me to their home, as we were talking of homecoming. Their sensitivity brought about warmth to our exchange that I believe transpire in the film. All the musicians involved were very respectful and interested in this project and their participation. They released the rights to the use of their photos, music and information without blinking an eye. Interestingly, however, just as it would have happened then, they were a bit feisty towards each other as they participated in different group within the scene, just like that conversation never ceased. This aspect revealed an element of sub-culture that I had forgotten. Torino is also a relatively provincial environment while very open to the international exchanges and I am glad to have come about viewed as an outsider. I hope this has helped moving forward the past conversations. In general among the musicians, the most interesting experience was with Lou Morel, whom Elena and I met by chance in a music bar. He is a very warm person and his approach was interpreted as inappropriate. We started a heated conversation on our perceived
notion of chauvinism in Italian male population. Much to our surprise, Lou was certainly ready
to prove us wrong and he did. Even though one person cannot represent a quantitative sample of
the population, I was pleased to account that in his bar not just him but the ambience was This
consideration made me reflect on how I feel strongly that one should bring forth the ‘humanity’
of the subject(s) of the film. Rossellini talked about it more precisely (Adriano Aprà 120). He
stated that in each person, there is a special quality that all human beings have and this humanity
should be center stage in spite of any original ideas from the filmmaker who should as much as
possible behave with a self-denying and compassionate attitude. Being liberally educated, I
believe that whenever I enter any story I should look for the ideas, and most importantly, reserve
my judgment, acknowledge my prejudice, and wait until I can say I understand what is presented
to me.
Chapter 2

From Mother to Daughter and Back: The Notes

Originally we had envisioned a dialogue in front of the camera between mother and daughter, as we discussed, but two determining factor changed the approach. Elena did not desire to be directly engaged in a conversation and was very uncomfortable in front of the camera. It was immediately clear to me that I did not want to force a result out of her and expose her and that I had to respect her need as a subject or better yet, protect it.

Secondly the poverty of this production brought to light that in order to accomplish the work, we could only work one at the time on camera. In a few cases, we did also pursue the help of our guide from the Torino community as a third camera operator, but by the end it was clear that we were most comfortable when it was just the two of us working together. An intimate bond had soon been established which went beyond the nature of a mother-daughter relationship. We found ourselves closer in our approach as two human beings as we started to collaborate. Our perception of the city was similar and when it differed it lent itself to very stimulating exchanges, which continuously informed the process.

The audio notes have come organically to us as a result of this relationship and off the set dialogue and reflections. With a first edit, I was the only person talking while Elena was roaming the city and in the second edit, after feedback from various audiences, we decided that she had to respond not only in abstract and specific actions but also in words. The result is a dramatically improved, more cohesive story. Possibly a subsequent edit may allow us to further the effect as we reconsider balancing some of the specific themes within the full story.
Born 1962 - “A Torino Industrial Boom Baby”

Time

It also became very clear to Elena and I that this film had to discuss not only the music phenomenon of punk as an art expression and political stance but also the time that had elapsed from when it originally formed. This timing is strongly correlated to my growth from youth to adulthood. We did not need to be literal about it, in this project while the photos of the initial credits with their quick disarray accounted for my past, so much time had past before our return. One way to poetically trace this passing of the time was through movement in the space. We decided to move the journey along with various means of transportations, that at the same expressed facets of it, and follow Elena during one day in the city. She was always to be on the move whether she was riding the bus, on the subway, riding a yellow bike, or finding places on foot. As she did this, she was, in our view, retracing my history and could finally begin to understand the stories that I had told her so many times.

The words had to follow her around, echoing in her head. Time for her reflections would ensue a reaction with a natural progression, as she moved within a Torino that is currently ages away from the town I grew up in. In doing so, Elena could experience, as Lacan explains (205), the ‘displacement gaze’ in front of a mirror, the anxious state that comes with the awareness that one can be viewed. Finally, she could experience her own vision of the town as well as seeing it through my eyes.
Language Used

Another element that we discussed was the use of language in our conversation. Elena is fully bilingual and is comfortable not only in both languages but also both cultures. She has been part of the Italian community abroad, participated in Italian life in the United States, as well as having visited Italy countless times and explored it well. Along with her bi-cultural upbringing, she is pursuing a degree in French and Francophone Africa at Fordham University. So has a wide understanding of language, culture, and identity. In relation to Italy, however, this was the first time we were able to spend time together in Torino at length since her birth, as she was raised predominantly in the United States. In this homecoming, we felt that our common language needed to be English, as it is a fundamental component of our culture and identity. Furthermore to make this homecoming more authentic we needed to have the appropriate psychological distance. While we could have placed subtitles for the dialogue notes as we did for the dialogue of the native speakers, we felt the need to keep the language, to use a term from Dante’s Divine
Comedy (Inferno, Canto I, 15), in ‘exile’. We had a long conversation one afternoon and stopped and decided to fully solve this element before continuing the filming process. We felt as so that such language could allow us to reflect and take respite from the strong emotional impact of our Italian surroundings.

^ Me in an all girl punk band – 20 years old

< Elena, punk music lover – 20 years old
Tying it all together

The last layer to the story, were the stories: the Torino Soccer Team, Punk Music, and Cinema. The last dilemma was how to tie them all together despite the fact that they are apparently so diverse in nature, scope, and environment. We decided to ignore this element in the filming process. This piece did not have to be realistic but poetic and personal interpretation of the city. Moreover, this piece was meant for me an adult filmmaker, and Elena a young bi-cultural woman, to find our voices as women. I had left Torino in haste, essentially running off. The time had come for me to admittedly face this fact, why it had happened, and what the outcome of such an escape was. We understood there was a real need to stay open as the various scenarios unfolded in front of our eyes and allow for occasions to arise and provide us an indication on the weaving of the story.

Gran Torino circa 1940s
Tracing the soccer spoke to my heritage and family legacy, the Punk to my youth, and cinema to the rite of passage from youth to adulthood. These topics also speak about time in terms of socio-political and cultural development of my city. Torino is an industrial city that was at the heart of the unification of Italy both politically and economically. As a result, Torino was at the core of the class conflict and is keeping this fight alive in its post-industrial desolation. Therefore we started tracing also a layered chronological thread in the story where soccer related to far and recent past, punk related to the recent past and present, and cinema related to the far and recent past and present.
Notes

PROLOGUE

Dear Elena,

It has been a long time that we have not been here in Torino together, where you were born 20 years ago. You asked me about the Torino punk music scene and wanted to know more about it. Now you are the same age I was when I got involved with it back in the day… it was a surprise, a happy surprise that you asked me. It has been a long time since I’ve thought about that period in my town. When I left, I basically ran off… it was difficult, because this town for me had been very important but also not always healthy with negative energy…I started working in Milan then Rome as a model and an actress and then I finally left Italy altogether…I felt I was not in my element any longer…This feels like I am coming back home with you… and the more I think about it…the more I realize that the story is complex and to tell you about music, I would need to discuss a few other things about Torino … things that are also part of the story or at least my story of the city: politics, being a fan of Torino soccer, and the love of cinema …take it as it, this is just my take…but I hope it helps.
PART 1 – Torino Soccer Team

Grandma Elena loved the Gran Torino and she would often talk about it, she would have been proud to know you are roaming its turf right now and breathing its air, and learned a bit of its story of courage, hard work and solidarity…this is Torino too…

ELENA

I’m shocked to find the pride of the neighborhood in ruins. It makes me wonder about the struggle, about fighting for the working class. How do you rebuild? How must it have been in the past to inspire such love in Nonna?

PART 2 – Punk Music

The beginning of the punk scene was a very confusing time, we were in the middle of terrorism and end of politics as we knew them…personally I listened to so much music, because it was my refuge. My friends were DJ's and musicians, I started a girl band…it felt then that this was what it was all about… I do not know now…

PART 3 – Cinema

…and Torino is also the dream and its story, where cinema in Italy first started due to its industry and its visionary artists……and this is where some of us redirected our action from music to film…

ELENA

I think you’re brave in shifting this discourse, proving that film is something for everyone. I understand now that recording and documenting is your way of protesting the past and present.
I’m in awe of this network of protestors. I thought they would have still existed in the music scene here but admire that they are now fighting with film.

*PART 4 - Finale*

Torino is a laboratory of ideas and emotions, what will happen now in this deep crisis, is hard to tell…would like to discover it together my love, Torino is Our town.
Chapter 3

Meeting Torino: The Places and Its People

The City

Capital of the first Unified Kingdom of Italy in 1861, Torino is a city of firsts. The birthplace of Italian cinema, radio, television and a technological pole it has been throughout its history the engine driving the economy of the region of Piemonte and then of the unified nation after the beginning of the First Italian Republic in 1946. It was the site of the nation’s first industrialization and since then has led the progressive expression of class conflict all the way to the final chapter of FIAT in the city at the beginning of 2014. Torino is seen through a personal lens and it does not account for all its prismatic facets.

Torino Soccer Team and Its Turf

The city is divided in two fan groups rooting for the ‘white and black’ of Juventus or the ‘maroon’ of Toro. It is not just a chromatic division. Juventus was founded in 1897 by the Fiat Corporation and is historically one of the most famous and internationally competitive soccer teams in the world. Torino soccer team or Toro, founded in 1906, has been a team that has had
some of the best players of all time and has developed a very passionate and loyal following from the working class. The Filadelfia, Toro’s stadium named after the street it is located on, has been a shrine of the ‘Gran Torino’ team, which in the 1940s won practically everything at a national and international level.

Protest for the Reconstruction of the Filadelfia Stadium

Today this stadium is in ruin and there is pending litigation on its restoration. The stadium was a masterpiece of Art Nouveau and it has been abandoned as the city’s interest has shifted from the Filadelfia towards Delle Alpi, the stadium of Juventus.

The Butcher, Claudia, and Vincenzo

Butcher and Claudia

Toro’s fans are very passionate when it comes to their team. They watch and root whether Toro is playing at home or away. With the Butcher, one of the leaders of the “Maroon Bleachers”, and
Claudia we have a good representation of the city’s independent spirit that is not willing to bend to the ownership of Fiat family, Agnelli. They are just as proud of their homegrown business as they are of their little, great team. In 2013, Claudia and the Butcher, Filippo, explained to us that being a Toro fan is an instinct that you feel inside, that you can not choose. You are either part of it or not. Claudia and Filippo were clearly born and bred in Torino.

Vincenzo has lived in Torino since the late 1940s but he is not originally from Torino. His story is representative of migration of southern Italians coming to north in search of work and better opportunities. He owns a small business repairing shoes but it is also filled with memories of Toro’s glory days. Everyone knows and respects Vincenzo because he represents the legacy of the past and the memory of the Gran Torino. The team that won it all and made millions of people dream of a strong Italy right in the middle of a terrible war. A generation of players who for the most part held a second job but played hard on the field until the end, regardless of their opponents. Proud, fierce and truly gifted is how many remember them and it is a locus of mythology in the Toro fan group. Vincenzo lives beyond the myth and he reminds us of the club’s truth: solidarity and never leaving anyone behind. Unlike the past, self-interested managers without heart guide the teams of the present.

**The Music Scene of the Punk and of Today**

Torino in the late 1970s into the late 1980s was the capital of the punk scene in Italy. As a filmmaker and music critic Guido Chiesa told us this happened mainly because of its industrial background and consequently its natural affiliation with the similar political stance occurring in northern Europe and United States at that time. Torino has also a strong history of music with the Conservatory of Music and an important orchestra with a very cultured public that had a taste for classical, jazz, and contemporary music. Once again a city of innovation and curiosity, Torino is
in touch with what is new whether it is happening within the city or from afar.

Guido Chiesa - Filmmaker and Music Critic

The nucleus of punk started in the abandoned homes of Torino in the late 1970s. These groups joined forces with the generation of university students and workers that were defeated politically in those years in the climax of the protest, which peaked with the extremist expression of communist and fascist terrorists. A name like ‘Red Brigade’ resonates deeply with every person of my age from Torino, as we all remember someone who went from protesting in the street to killing with a gun in hand. There was a large grey area at the time in which the use of violence was perceived as necessary against the ‘enemy of the working class.’ It had started with the tough protesters picketing the Fiat Corporation that was followed by police responding with equal intensity. Thirty-five years of almost uninterrupted Democrat Christian party ruling under the blessing of NATO, it had not helped in the making. It did seem then that the game was rigged and only a vehement protest could bring about change. Thus the birth of extremist factions who then brought down the full protest movement perceived too close to the criminals. In this aftermath, many of us turned to music, theater, and culture in general as an outlet to continue expressing our discontent. Punk provided the perfect combination for many of us. It
harbored the anger we felt, expressed the awakening of the life after politics with its slogan “No Future!” It had a very impactful aesthetic made of impressive hairdos like never seen before, use of heavy makeup and a highly creative approach concerning clothing, in one word: theatrical. Where the politics had left the stage, its enactment had taken place not as a farce but rather as Brechtian Verfremdungseffekt, enstrangement effect, by which the German author wanted the audience to understand intellectually the characters’ dilemmas and the wrongdoing to expose them and instigate a reaction in the audience.

With this idea in mind, bands in Torino like Negazione (Negation) and others with names that included the same suffix – Azione (action) started to emerge and in a few years took the national and international scene by surprise. Lou Morel, who is now a musician of Blue Daville and a fan of that period, told us about what it meant to be at those concerts and what kind of energy it expressed. Furthermore, if you were not part of this malaise, you were the enemy complacent to the reigning Thatcherism in England or the Democrat Christian overbearing ruling in Italy. These groups asked you to make your voice heard, to disobey the norm, from the way you presented yourself at work or at school, to the oppressive practices that the system represented. In Italy, almost as an answer to the defeat of the politics, the stance signified ‘we are here, and we are here to stay! And we will not abide by your rules, we will break them and change the rules!’ The punk concerts were an event and always unpredictable. You were supposed to be part of the crowd and the ‘pogo’ dancing started, which was a dance that was a few minutes away from a fight in some cases. Lou Morel talked about them in the film and sighed at the fact that now the same music provokes at most anodding of the head. The contemporary public is distant and it is not a Brechtian stance, it demonstrated an alienation from the emotion and an apathy and indifference, which was unknown in the punk era.
I'm a pessimist because of intelligence, but an optimist because of will.
— Antonio Gramsci, Gramsci's Prison Letters

The indifference is the deadweight of history. The indifference operates with great power on history. The indifference operates passively, but it operates. It is fate, that which cannot be counted on. It twists programs and ruins the best-conceived plans. It is the raw material that ruins intelligence. That what happens, the evil that weighs upon all, happens because the human mass abdicates to their will; allows laws to be promulgated that only the revolt could nullify, and leaves men that only a mutiny will be able to overthrow to achieve the power. Some whimper piously, others curse obscenely, but nobody, or very few ask themselves: If I had tried to impose my will, would this have happened?

I am a partisan, I am alive. I feel the pulse of the activity of the future city that those on my side are building is alive in their conscience. And in it, the social chain does not rest on a few; nothing of what happens in it is a matter of luck, nor the product of fate, but the intelligent work of the citizens. Nobody in it is looking from the window of the sacrifice and the drain of a few. Alive, I am a partisan. That is why I hate the ones that don’t take sides, I hate the indifferent.”
— Antonio Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci

As the political dream of the 1970s did not coalesce into the expected transformation of society groups of people start to spread, as we said, in all realms of culture and arts. Many spontaneous groups gave life to new theater companies and some others started their film production companies. As the medium was still very costly some of them, such as the filmmaker Mimmo
Calopresti, started collaboration with the Archives of the Workers Movement as well as the World War Two Partisans Association. These established groups had funding and were seeking to avoid the loss of historical footage and to document their past. This was a great opportunity to jumpstart the artistic work in the closed circuit of the film industry of the Italy of the time. Torino, however, by then already had a long standing tradition of preservation of film and a collection had already been established by Maria Adriana Prolo and Giovanni Pastrone. Pastrone was the director of the film *Cabiria* (1915) that marks the birth of Italian cinema and becomes a beacon of inspiration in 1916 for D.W.Griffith and his *Intolerance*. Moreover, Torino has an important university in which film studies Professor Rondolino created, in 1982, the Torino Youth Film Festival which is now the Torino Film Festival. From this forward thinking scholar, who promoted a culture of engaged film production, many filmmakers took off with the support of the Torino Film Commission which was established in 1995. Today Torino hosts the collection initiated by Prolo and Pastrone in the National Museum of Cinema, which started its permanent exhibit in 2008 in the Mole Antonelliana. It also happens to be the tallest museum building in Europe and symbol of Torino.

**Director Mimmo Calopresti**

**Mole Antonelliana**
Conclusion

_Cabiria_ (1914) was the second silent colossal in the world shot in Turin, Italy, by Giovanni Pastrone, after _Quo Vadis?_ The film is set in ancient Sicily, Carthage, and Cirta during the period of the Second Punic War. Italian author Gabriele d’Annunzio contributed to the screenplay writing all of the inter-titles and naming all characters and the movie itself. The film was noted as being the first popular film to use the tracking shot – the camera is mounted on a dolly allowing it to both follow action and move within a film set or location. In June 1914, _Cabiria_ became the first motion picture to be screened on the grounds of the White House, when a screening on the lawn was viewed by President Wilson and his family.³

_Cabiria_ is a film that was born in Torino. As Scorsese reminds us, this is a film made in a relatively small Italian city and was not just a colossal that impressed the United States President Wilson but contained much innovation and created the first example of the ‘tracking shot’ with a dolly and a camera mounted on it. This sums up this unassuming and sober city. The attitude is fully equipped for the ‘dream’, as no project is too big to tackle. Citizens of Torino, as filmmaker Calopresti has remarked, have a strong sense of independence. The sobriety of the inhabitants, however, measures such dreams of ambition with a degree of great realism. As a consequence the opportunity to achieve it guides the curious and open intellect to innovation. Sobriety and innovation are the guides to ‘believing the impossible’.

Having been born in a Piemontese family originally not from Torino, this city was clearly a beacon of light in my upbringing, it symbolized elegance, intelligence and spirit. However, Torino is also a city of great contrast. By the 1960s, the time in which I was born, the elegant upper class of the industrial and noble aristocracy would share the same space with the rural and southern immigrants who had reached the city to provide work force to the biggest factory in existence in the world, Fiat Mirafiori. This city exploded in a few years, and by the 1970s, had reached a million people. The condition of the housing projects built for the workers, accompanied depriving conditions in the factory. A population of farmers, eradicated from its land, spent 10 hours a day of the working week in unsafe jobs that did not truly deliver the

‘dream’ of better opportunities. A class conflict soon arose. I was the first born of my family in the city and the life in “My Torino” was still tied to the traditional life styles that the farming families had then with classical gender roles: my mother was working at home and my father was a banking manager after many years of career in the ranks in provincial branches of his company. As my father died in my teens, our ‘dream’ of better opportunities was from then on slanted and emptied of part of the joy that drove us to the city. My personal history soon crossed path with a generational one. We were once removed from the Flower Power movement in Europe and the class conflict was giving way to armed revolutionary conflict that destroyed all hope for a substantial change in the society. They were dangerous times. Police would be stationed at street corners with rifles in their hands and we were just short of a civil war. I participated in the heated debate and I found myself critical of the violence. My focus was working with the population that had disabilities in my neighborhood and participating in an anarchist group while going to school. As I grew older, the politics had shrunk to a simulacrum of the protest and participation I once knew. My generation and that came before me engaged in continuing the protest in a novel way: through the arts and culture. My group specifically gravitated to music, and what that world expressed seemed to continue the fight. With the sobriety of Torino, we picked up the pieces and continued, in a way, from were we had left off. These were years of development and a new hope took shape in many of us that we had moved the conflict to another level and with different means while keeping it still focused on the necessity of social change. However, as a woman I found it difficult to find my space in the Italy of the time. I started working as a model and then an actress, which allowed me to move the major cities, Milan, Florence, Rome. I would, however, always return home where my cultural and intellectual identity had formed. The boundaries seemed then too narrow still, I had met an
acting coach from United States and, in due time, I made it over here. I ran off. It was a
confusing feeling and then I could not quite call it. My young daughter Elena has provided me
with an opportunity just to do that. In fact, her interest in music and my experience has led us
back to where it all started. I am proud to have Elena has take advantage of this chance to
explore and push her comfort zone. In my view, she has matured greatly. The other day, in
retrospect about this project, she said, “it was good to be working together and I believe that you
produced something important for our family.” I do not want to further elaborate on Elena’s
perspective or empowerment as it would not be appropriate, so I will limit my remarks.
However, in my case, turning the camera on myself has produced an effect that is much greater
than expected.
As a filmmaker, I had to work for the first time with a very limited budget, tackle all aspects of
production on my own, confront my fears on technique, and the risk of failure. I am very glad
that in spite of my shortcomings, Elena’s heart and humanity as a subject has come through. I am
glad the subjects who participated also have provided me positive feedback on how they are
portrayed.
As a woman, I realized the reason of my frustration with my country of the time and my present
frustration with the remaining chauvinist attitude I still unfortunately encounter there.
As an adult, I found my place back in my community and although it will never be the same as it
was Torino is still my town.
Appendix 1

Thesis Proposal

Synopsis

*Torino Is My Town* is a first person narrative documentary, 25 minutes in length shot on high definition video. Through a series of events, I will present the experience of coming back to the town where I was born, Torino in northern Italy, and lived the majority of my life. In this film I will explore the ideas of change, continuity, and the formation of identity.

In addition, my daughter Elena/ELENA, age 20, will be working with me on this film. She will play multiple roles in the film. Along with assisting in production, she will be in it as my daughter who listens to her mother’s history while exploring her own identity. Together we investigated how Torino has changed since the 1970’s and 80’s through two points of view: a 50-year-old mother and her 20-year-old daughter. Are these changes a manifestation of the same culture? How different would Elena’s life had been if she had grown up in Torino rather than in US? What is her take on what she is experiencing in Torino? Some of the issues that we will be exploring are how location and time shape artistic formation and political identity. I will be looking back at my youth and the people, places, and events that influenced my formative years. I plan on making a self-portrait having Torino as a background, and my daughter to be the different lens to offset my perceptions and keep me in check in truly revealing my story.
**Treatment**

One of the first locations I plan on filming is also a symbol of Torino, the old Stadium *Filadelfia*. This is the original stadium of the “Great Torino” soccer team that won 2 World Cups for Italy and was a source of glory to Italy in the international arena in the 1930s and 1940s. I will meet ANGELO, 35, and ANTONIO, 70, who will discuss the current status of the stadium and its decay while discussing as well what it means to be a Torino soccer fan.

*Growing up with a mother who was an avid fan of the Torino soccer team, I developed through the years of my youth, a sense of belonging to a part of the city. This identity was political as well as sport. In those days the FIAT Corporation owned the opposing team Juventus, and which side you choose expressed your ideological perspective. Does this stand true today? How has Torino soccer changed and how does this affect me? Is this a manifestation of the change, if any, of the town itself? How is the phenomenon of the fan club subculture representative of Torino’s perspective at large?*

Another location I will revisit is the hub of the Torino music scene, where I developed as a young artist. I will visit with some old friends downtown at a local venue, *Amantes*. This group is comprised of visual artists, filmmakers, musicians, and DJs and they are in the midst of a small musical event. SALVATORE, 45, will describe his current engagement with music and Elisabetta and Salvatore will reminisce on the music of the late 1970s and beginning 1980s and the birth of the garage music scene from the mods, to the punk groups and their attitude and political views. They discuss what is today’s scene and what relation they have with it.
I was in an all girl punk band in the early 1980s and I was also a DJ, and a Hip Hop performing artist and I have been engaged with the music scene from the inside. How does it make me feel to go back to my roots and discuss that time with musicians of that time and of now? Would I like to go back to singing? Why? Is music a crucial part of my artistic expression? Why?

Another artistic expression in my life has been acting. I started in Torino in the late 1980s. At the time many others were approaching film and story telling as the cameras that did not require any longer film stock became available and therefore the ability to produce outside the mainstream film industry. At the Museum of Cinema, in a café in front of the National Museum of Cinema, I will meet MADDALENA, 30, and others filmmakers who are today trying to survive the budgetary cuts specifically to the production of documentaries. We discuss how the cinema scene developed in the 1980s with the birth of the Torino Film Festival and how a full generation of filmmakers was born out of this wave also under the auspices of Torino University.

I will also meet Calopresti and discuss with him his take on the city and its film production, while we reminisce on our film shooting and beginnings. For my first short as an actress, Love Song (1986) the Director Mimmo Calopresti asked me to take the role of a woman who represented the city of Torino.

I was an actress in Italy from 1986-1991, before that I was a model and worked on TV shows. Now I am a filmmaker. What if I were a filmmaker in the 1980s? Why wasn’t I? Do I wish I had been one then or am I happy to work on documentaries now?
OTHER POSSIBLE TOPICS I will be exploring are: family, migration, and the empowerment of women.

Possible locations for these topics:

- My original Torino apartment and neighborhood
- The town of Cherasco where Elena as a little baby lived until she was 3 years old
- The rural village of San Giovanni rural birth village and family burial cemetery
- The hotel of Terme di Valdieri, to collect the grandma’s sister interview

Style

I will work both in a traditional and poetic format. We will meet the subjects and they will act as guides or “Virgil”, guiding me back home. In addition, I will incorporate a voice over narration, reflecting on my experiences, both past and present. Sometimes I will be on camera, sometimes I will interview people, but most of the time I will be off camera. Elena will also be on camera and in some scenes. I also plan to weave the past and present organically into the story, by using some archival photos, films, and documents.

The language will be English mixed with Italian (with captions).

Production Crew and Equipment

I will shoot this film myself. Sound will not be separate but added to main camera to allow more control on the shoot.

When I will be on camera, I will have a second cameraperson.

Finally, I have a small pre-production and production team with 2 people from Torino who will help me for contacts, locations, and shooting.

I will shoot with:
Canon 5D II DLS plus Zacuto Z-Finder Pro

Kit Shoulder Mount

For sound:

Additional sound kit Beachtek DXA

Sennheiser EW 112-p G3-A

List of Archival Materials

- Family pictures

- Torino footage and pictures
Appendix 2

Budget

Director-Elisabetta Sanino D’Amanda

Torino Is My Town

Shooting Ratio - 25:1

Production (20 Days, in staggered order)

Format – Flash cards

Post Production, including compositing, titles, color correction, DVD authoring (9 months, while active production continues)

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