

DONNE DIMENTICATE DONNE NASCOSTE;
RE-EXAMINING THE FEMALE FIGURE IN THE THEATRICAL WORKS OF
AMELIA PINCHERLE ROSSELLI

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ABSTRACT

Maureen Michele Melita: *Donne Dimenticate Donne Nascoste*;
Re-examing the Female Figure in the Theatrical Works of
Amelia Pincherle Rosselli
(Under the direction of Federico Luisetti)

Early twentieth century criticism of Italian literature often treats the work of women playwrights as insignificant, reducing their theatrical texts to the trivial and non-political. Contemporary critics of the time, such as Benedetto Croce acknowledge the *effort* made by these women, but fail to recognize their talent or contribution to Italian literature in general, and women's literature specifically. This project looks at the critical reception of Amelia Pincherle Rosselli's theatrical works, along with the political climate of the times, and the contributions made by this playwright to the development of a female literary voice. Within this thesis, I examine the presence and trace the evolution of the female figure in Rosselli's works, as well as the feminist perspective through a theory of theft and reappropriation by Adriana Cavarero. This theory, laid out in her text, *In Spite of Plato*, allows me to rewrite Pincherle Rosselli's female protagonists in terms of a revised social order that places women at its center

Modern Italian philosophical discourse on equality and difference, with theorists such as Cavarero and Luisa Muraro at the forefront, allows for a new reading and contemporary re-thinking about these often disregarded or forgotten works and their protagonists. This project makes two significant contributions to the field of literature. First, it draws significant attention to a neglected and undervalued genre, therefore seeking to fill a gap in the history of women's literature (specifically in Italian theatre) between Italian Unification and the rise of Fascism.

Second, and more specifically, it focuses on the issues associated with defining the female voice and figure during the first wave of the Women's Movement in Italy, occurring at the same time.

I dedicate this work to my parents and sister,
and to the memories of Carl, Lillian, Annie, Orazio, Danny, and Ian.

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INTRODUCTION

Early twentieth-century criticism of Italian literature often treats the work of women playwrights as insignificant, treating their theatrical texts as trivial and nonpolitical. While contemporary critics acknowledged the *effort* made by female playwrights, they also failed to recognize the inherent talent or the greater theoretical contributions to Italian literature made by these women.¹ With a rare few exceptions, women writers (particularly in the theatre) seem to disappear from Italian literary accounts precisely at the same time the first wave of feminism began to spread throughout Europe. From a strictly historical standpoint, womens' influences on the theatre of a newly-unified Italy appear to be relatively few. In *The Woman Writer in Late-nineteenth-century Italy : Gender and the Formation of Literary Identity*, Lucienne Kroha notes

¹In *Letteratura Femminile*, Luigi Capuana discusses in depth the female writer in Italy at the end of the nineteenth century. In the introduction, Giovanna Chimirri notes that Capuana reduces women's contribution to that of providing femininity (17). While this may not be as politically correct as one may wish in 2016, the fact remains that in his essay, Capuana goes on to defend the women writer. He begins by saying that he does not accept other critics' contemptuous disregard for female literature, although he does not cite any examples of this or give any names of critics who do this. As he discusses the female writer and her femminità, it seems as though he *may* be referring in some ways to an as-yet-undefined female voice. It is important to remember that Capuana was writing at a time when neither the female voice nor an appropriate lexicon for discussing womens' literature existed. All manner of speaking about literature used traditional terminology, definitions, standards, and structures. Perhaps the word femminità was the word best adapted to the argument. In addition, Capuana talks about the future of writing and the disparity between men and women in the field. His perspective is interesting, as he does not discount women and their ability to excel, but rather, he believes they are in an uphill battle as part of a system that keeps them in less respected position than that of their male counterparts. However, he also appears to have been educated in the patriarchal (Platonic) way, as he notes that the "l'intelletto immaginativo è mascolino" and that it had "aperto la via" to art. He goes on to add that though women will not create new forms of art, because there are no more forms to create. "...le donne saranno quel che ora sono gli uomini; ma allora gli uomini saranno tutt'altri; e la distanza rimarrà uguale a quella di oggi" (20-21). Perhaps Capuana's assessment of women in literature is more disheartening than anything else. For while he appears to be a champion of their involvement, he also seems to be conscience of a never-ending cycle of women's inequality, for which there does not appear to be a solution.

that women's writing was occasionally referenced by prominent literary heavyweights such as Benedetto Croce, Luigi Capuana and Giovanni Verga; after which, however, the topic remained virtually unexplored until the 1970s (3-4). In truth, Italian women have written for the theatre from its transition from improvisational touring companies to the fully staged productions using written scripts; first in the form of *scenarii* for the commedia dell'arte and later, in completely developed and scripted plays – following the example of Carlo Goldoni. Nuns wrote convent plays while women writers of all types, whether poets, novelists, or even translators, endeavored as playwrights (Introduction *Her Soul* 44-45). Even the most basic internet search today does not reveal the women hidden behind the scenes, and what was lost to history was not only the presence of women, but also a defining female figure created by a female dramatist.

A. Amelia Pincherle Rosselli

One such dramatist is Amelia Pincherle Rosselli, who was born in Venice, in January 1870 (Baj 451) just nine years after Italian Unification and at the onset of the Women's Movement (1848-1918).² When most people hear the name 'Amelia Rosselli,' one of two things come to mind: the mother of Carlo and Nello Rosselli, or the prominent poet. Unfortunately, neither recollection of Amelia does much to counter the well-known problem of historical inaccuracy and disregard for Italian women authors. In the first example, Amelia is defined only through her relationship to her sons³ with no mention of the many literary contributions she

² Cavarero, A. and Restaino, F. 2002: 8.

³ Roselli is also often defined in terms of her relationship to her nephew, Alberto Moravia (1907-1990), who was actually born Alberto Pincherle. Moravia was the son of Amelia's brother and for many years, they had relationship of mentor and mentee, as Amelia helped him in his own endeavors, as a writer. They were close until political view divided them. Amelia discusses this episode and their relationship, as well as its influence on her own sons, in different parts of her *Memorie*. In a longer research work, the relationship between Moravia and Rosselli would be included in the discussion.

made; whereas in the second example she is confused with her granddaughter, a modern poet, who was arguably more famous than the playwright.⁴

Amelia Pincherle Rosselli wrote a total of seven plays for the stage between 1898 and 1924,⁵ a somewhat unheard-of feat for a woman, at this time. As Alba Amoia notes, “That Italian women of the nineteenth century should be writing at all for publication marked an important innovation in a country where female literary production had hitherto been rare indeed” (60). Katherine E. Kelly adds that, in the theatre specifically, the issue was not a lack of production by women but instead selective memory on the part of the literary world. She states that critics and anthologies alike “pointedly ignored women dramatists, remaining silent about all but three or four.”⁶ Rosselli, however, did manage to write for publication: not only theatrical works but also

⁴ In the concluding chapters of *Memorie*, Maria Calloni provides more information on Rosselli’s immediate surviving family members after her death. The author dedicates a fair amount of this section to Rosselli’s granddaughter, her namesake, Amelia (1930-1996). She was called Melina by family members in order to avoid confusion. Melina was very connected to her grandmother, from whom she inherited a talent and love for writing. As a poet, Melina had a great deal of success. Personally, though, she was unhappy and on February 11, 1996, she took her own life. Calloni points out that this was also the anniversary of the day that Sylvia Plath killed herself (265-266).

⁵ The publication of several of Rosselli’s plays occurred well after their production on the stage. See the chapter entitled “Teatro italiano, coscienza europea” in *Una donna nella storia. Vita e letteratura di Amelia Pincherle Rosselli*, for more information. A list of all of Rosselli’s written works appears in the same volume in the *Bibliografia delle opere* (145). As well, Natalia Costa-Zalessow discusses some of Rosselli’s works in the introductions of both versions (Italian and English) of *Anima*.

⁶ Kelly, 3. For more information, see the introduction to Chapter 2 of Kelly’s anthology, in which Costa-Zalessow outlines a brief history of women writers in Italian theatre. She cites several examples of women who were writing successfully for the stage. In this introduction, Costa-Zalessow notes that Rosselli’s work in *Anima* stood out among that of her contemporaries. The author corroborates what Kelly and other researchers have found that is, an unexplainable disappearance of these women and their works from history. Costa-Zalessow also points out, where possible, which works have been lost to us. Her introduction is a good starting point for more research on this subject (44-48).

articles, poetry, reviews and, later, novels.⁷ Rosselli's body of dramatic work contained a range of material, from her initial success with *Anima* to one-act tragic monologues, two comedies written in Venetian dialect, and her epic final drama, *Emma Liona (Lady Hamilton)*.

Five of Rosselli's seven plays feature female protagonists, and it is through these women that Amelia offers today's reader a new perspective on the female figure at the dawn of the twentieth-century. In this dissertation, I will explore the female figure in three works by Rosselli: *Anima*, *L'Illusione*, and *Emma Liona (Lady Hamilton)*. In these works, Rosselli managed to re-define the essence of the female figure: a fact that is often overlooked, even by those considered experts on her dramatic writings. Since the mid-1990s, scholars (mainly Italian) have begun to revive the memory of Amelia Pincherle Rosselli--and along with it, her plays. Her principal biographer, Maria Calloni, calls Amelia the first Italian female playwright, while Giovanna Amato refers to her as a feminist (Amato 41). Although awarded the title of 'feminist' by Amato and others, her plays have not been explored in-depth from a feminist perspective.

B. Women in Italian Theatre

Theatrical success for Italian playwrights has often been hard to attain. In her article "Women's Theatre in Italy," Susan Bassnett points out that "the greatest strength of Italian theatre has never come from its playwrights" (111). Traditionally, Italian theatre has focused on the history of music, opera, *commedia dell'arte*, and improvisational works that did not rely on scripted plays. The situation has not improved greatly even today and Bassnett notes that playwrights such as Goldoni, Verga, Pirandello, and Fo were the exceptions, not the rule. If the

⁷ An excellent resource that discusses several of Rosselli's literary contributions is Volume 112 of the *Quaderni del Circolo Rosselli*. This is one of the most detailed and in-depth discussions of her works and life. In addition, see also Volume 94 of the same journal.

outlook was poor for male playwrights, theatre historian Maggie Gale reminds us that it was far worse for women. She notes a particular deficit in her own field of British women's theatre between 1918 and 1962: the same is true for Italian theatre. Gale's research of this time period provides "a link in a chain between two overtly political theatre movements at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century and the feminist theatres of the late twenty-first century;" my research seeks to fill a similar void in Italian theatre history. Currently, there is little being done in the field to reconcile these disparate trends (10).

While Gale reinforces Kelly's assertion that women have always worked in and written for the theatre, she also points out that "women in theatre often get little historical recognition because they are not considered to have 'ideas' but merely technique; they are the women behind the great men, the muse, the inspiration or the nurturer"(10-11). In Rosselli's era, critics often compared the works of female authors to those of men instead of considering them on their own merit. Many modern theorists, who focus not only on equality of women but also on the importance of sexual difference, suggest that this type of critical reception was wholly unfair and a product of a misogynistic and patriarchal society. In such comparisons, female authors receive paradoxical criticism. On the one hand, they are faulted for not writing in a manner similar to or as well as their male counterparts; on the other hand, they are also criticized for not having their own voice. According to these standards, success as a female author (let alone a playwright) would seem near impossible. Rosselli, however, succeeded in this unlikely task even while working on the cusp of two literary movements--Italian literature was still transitioning from Romanticism to Realism.

C. Major Literary and Theatrical Influences

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries brought about a great number of changes to both the European and American stages. The greatest change was felt in the initial literary shift from Romanticism to Realism: the latter was first recognized in France in 1853 following the rejection of the former by the working classes (Brockett 378-79).⁸

Unfortunately, Italian literary conventions were slow to change and those of the theatre lagged even further behind. During the late nineteenth-century, Italian theatre made its “greatest impact internationally through touring stars [...]” and its contribution to drama “was minor, since for the most part, it merely followed traditions already established elsewhere” (411-12). While Realism began to take hold in theatres across Europe, Italian theatre was still focused on the great touring companies of Adelaide Ristori and Tommaso Salvini, as well as plays that were founded on the tenets of Romanticism. Many production companies also continued to rely heavily on opera (421). For several years, the plays of the Romantic era coexisted alongside those belonging to Realism, which found its roots in the positivism of Auguste Comte. By 1863, the theoretical foundations of Realism had been established: “Art must depict truthfully the real, physical world, and, since only the contemporary world can be observed directly, truth can be attained most fully through impersonal, objective observation and representation of the world around us” (379). Although the tenets of this new literary movement were now in place, “writers and directors made a marked break with the past” only after 1875 (412).

⁸ For more information on Realism and its relationship to American and European theatre, see chapters 14 and 15 in Oscar Brockett’s text. He provides a very clear and concise assessment of the literary influences on theatrical practices. As well, the author cites several philosophical and theoretical references and then applies those to the dramas produced during the period. He also discusses the works of Ibsen and his influence on the future of modern drama.

Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) was perhaps the single most important playwright of this period and it was his conscious choice, in the 1870s, to renounce his own style of writing in verse (“because it was unsuited to creating an illusion of reality”) that likely changed the course of modern theatre (425-26). Ibsen was one of the first playwrights to focus on the heart and soul of society; that is to say, the home and family, in a critical and realistic manner, taking an honest look inside the bourgeoisie. Oscar Brockett notes that Ibsen’s work

became a rallying point for supporters of a drama of ideas. Unlike Dumas *films* and Augier, who also wrote about controversial subjects, Ibsen did not resolve his plays in ways that confirmed received ideology. Rather, he made ideology the cause of problems and suggested the need to change it (426).

This same idea is echoed in the plays of Amelia Rosselli. Critics and scholars alike have noted similarities in her works to Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* and *Hedda Gabler*. Rosselli would no doubt have been familiar with the Scandinavian dramatist’s work both from her stay in Vienna (where his works were often performed) and in Italy, where Eleonora Duse made sure that *A Doll’s House* was performed as it was written.⁹ In any discussion of Rosselli’s plays, it is necessary to remember Ibsen’s innovations in theatre, while being very careful not to devalue Amelia’s dramas by categorizing them as a mere homage to Ibsen. Through this research, it will be clear that Rosselli did what Ibsen could not: she lent an authentic female voice and figuration to the female protagonists. She was able to take the dramas of Realism a step further than her literary predecessor had.

⁹ In Brockett’s volume, he recounts an interesting anecdote about Duse’s power as a famous actor, regarding the content of *A Doll’s House*. The theatre-going audiences in some parts of Europe were said to have difficulty with the bleakness of the original ending of the play and so Ibsen wrote a second, alternate, and more agreeable version, which was making its way through the continent. When discussion began about mounting an Italian production, Duse refused to perform in it unless the original version would be used. Duse won the argument with producers and the play became a success in Italy (426-427).

D. Approach to Plays

In order to explore the female figure from the feminist perspective it is necessary to engage one of Italy's foremost philosophers and feminist thinkers, Adriana Cavarero (1947 –). Founder of the prominent feminist circle Diotima, and author of several texts and articles on feminism (including *Le filosofie femministe* [1999] and *Stately Bodies* [2002]), Cavarero's theory is uniquely suited to this discussion of the female protagonists in the dramatic works of Amelia Rosselli. In one of Cavarero's most well-known works, *In Spite of Plato* (1995), she reinterprets four female figures found in the myths of Plato, who many consider to be the father of Western philosophy. Cavarero's work suggests a new way to interpret Rosselli's female characters. It is not enough to acknowledge the fact that the playwright put women front and center in her theatrical works; one must also understand these characters who, along with the playwright, lived in a world defined by a patriarchal order--an order whose origins can be traced back to Plato, himself. If Cavarero can succeed in reinterpreting the female figure in the works of Plato, then extending this process to Rosselli's plays is not only a possible step, but a logical one as well.

Furthermore, given that all the plays were written by Rosselli (a woman), it is necessary to add a woman's voice to their discussion and analysis since the established theories on theatrical literature and play analysis do not provide the reader with one. Even today, the field of play analysis retains Aristotle's *Poetics* as its theoretical foundation.¹⁰ My analysis will consider each of Rosselli's plays from the perspective of the female figure, with the goal of rereading

¹⁰ Aristotle's *Poetics* are the foundation of theatrical practice even today. In much the same way that art students must study the Greco-Roman classics and Renaissance masters, all theatre studies begin with the *Poetics*. In his treatise on tragedy, (the second book, on comedy, is believed lost – Else 10), Aristotle lays out the seven principles of the tragedy, which are still in use today.

them in the manner suggested by Adrianna Cavarero in *In Spite of Plato* (which I will outline in the following pages.)

In the introduction to this groundbreaking work on Plato's female figures, Rosi Braidotti states that "Cavarero returns the female figures in the classical texts to their literal, as opposed to their metaphorical, significance: she reads them as a woman reading women-in-the-text" (xii-xiii). The convincing arguments that arise from Cavarero's theory provide the framework for rereading the female subjectivity of the plays in this dissertation. These plays, along with many other forgotten theatrical works by Italian women up until after the Second World War, already suffer from a lack of a thorough reading, analysis, and sometimes even an actual production. In many ways, this lack of attention is a boon for someone working on these plays. On the other hand, there is priceless little research available, making so much of the work a leap into darkness; however, the clearly laid out arguments of Cavarero make the process of analysis somewhat easier.

D.1. In Spite of Plato

Cavarero's method of returning female figures to their literal significance begins with a rather radical technique. She commits the crime of theft and has no qualms about doing so, as she explains,

This is how the technique of theft works: I will steal feminine figures from their context, allowing the torn-up fabric to show the knots that hold together the conceptual canvas that hides the original crime.

And theft it is indeed, in the form of a tendentious robbery that pursues its object, unconcerned with recognizing the objective quality of the figures in their context. On the contrary, these figures are freely replayed, reactivated by a new way of thinking: the categories of the philosophy of sexual difference (5).

In defense of her tactic of theft, Cavarero writes,

Literature was the first discipline to admit the entry of women as writers and to prove itself an adequate field in which to discuss their need to write, so that by now women's literature offers a significant pantheon of heroines. Unfortunately, however, I know little about literature, and even less about creating figures. So I have stolen them (4).

It is through this process of stealing from context that the Italian philosopher will reappropriate the female subjectivity of four figures from the dialogues of Plato.¹¹ This reappropriated female subjectivity is not only applicable to the four mythical figures in question, but also to any female characters who were thereafter subject to the patriarchal framework (which has Plato's philosophy at its center.) Cavarero provides not only the process and tools for this appropriation, but also a vocabulary for discussing it. It is with this newly-reappropriated female subjectivity that we can then reread the works of Rosselli. Before beginning any analysis, though, it is necessary to summarize Cavarero's theories.

This manner of reading the plays will go beyond anything that the traditional play analysts, such as Aristotle, Robert Edmund Jones, Konstantin Stanislavsky,¹² or their male counterparts could have ever imagined or been capable of, simply because it is predicated on a female reality and a woman's ability to recognize experiences similar to her own within written

¹¹ It should be noted here that Cavarero does not take the figures from their original myths, but is instead creating a re-reading of Plato's philosophical interpretations of these texts, since tradition views Platonic thought as the originating theory of modern philosophy. Cavarero states that "Nevertheless, Plato's work is always the chief context which serves as the frame of reference for my work on theft. In my opinion, it is in Plato that the founding rite of matricide achieves its philosophical completion, even though not yet hardened into a systematic form." (9) It would not make sense to start with the myth itself before it was coopted by Plato, given that the modern philosopher sees Plato as the father of patriarchal thought. Within the text, however, Cavarero on occasion does delve a bit into the original myths in order to solidify and ground her arguments. In this way, providing counter arguments to the theories of Plato.

¹² Aristotle (384-322BC), Konstantin Stanislavsky (1863-1938), and Robert Edmond Jones (1887-1954). These men are considered indispensable to the fields of play analysis and criticism, as they provided the framework for creating theatrical productions. While Aristotle wrote about the literary and dramatic structure of the play itself, Stanislavsky focused on the role of the actor, and Jones on the visual elements, design, and sound. For more information see: *Poetics* (Aristotle), *An Actor Prepares* (Stanislavsky), and *The Dramatic Imagination* (Jones).

works. The theatre experts mentioned above have no such experience to which they can relate. One of the goals that Cavarero lays out for female readers is to use their own experiences in order to recognize themselves within the female figures found in literature.¹³ In the third chapter of *In Spite of Plato*, she focuses on the myth of Demeter and concentrates much of the discussion not only on the reciprocal female gaze between mother and daughter, but also between women. This idea will be useful in exploring the many, varied female relationships that exist in Rosselli's works. To be clear, Cavarero is not saying that each individual woman's experience should be systematically linked or corresponded to what happens within a particular literary work, for that would be reading too much into it. Instead, we should seek to recognize the greater female experience of all women in the literary figures before us.

The two axes within which Cavarero works are the philosophy of sexual difference and the centrality of birth (as opposed to death) in the teachings of Hannah Arendt (*Spite* 6). These two ideas provide the structure for Cavarero's reappropriation and for the analysis of the plays in this dissertation, all of which have female protagonists who are, in one way or another, mothers. Following below is a basic summary of the theories discussed by Cavarero that will be continually referred to throughout the analyses of the plays.

¹³ In the foreword to *In Spite of Plato*, Braidotti summarizes the work of Cavarero by stating that she reads the female figures in classical texts "as a woman reading women-in-the-text. Through this process, Cavarero establishes a web of interconnections between the representation of women in classical texts and the practice of sexual difference. Perfectly aware of the fact that these characters are the invention of male authors and that therefore they cannot be taken at face value as the expression of a female voice, Cavarero nonetheless claims that female readers do make a difference to the reception of these textual female figures. She thus takes a position that avoids romanticizing or essentializing the feminine, while asserting the powerful transformative presence of women. Between the feminist woman reader and the woman in the text there is a relation of identification and recognition: both are caught in a masculine conceptual universe. The active presence of female feminist readers is the factor that can alter the reception and therefore also the political usefulness of Plato's texts" (xii-xiii).

It is necessary to provide a few key points regarding traditional philosophy. First, the term “man” is used as the neutral/universal concept to describe all human beings. In addition, this concept of man is one of duality, in which man has two separate parts: body and soul¹⁴. The soul is a higher, pure being which not all creatures are capable of understanding or seeing. This understanding is reserved for philosophers, who at the time were male-only. The soul is the everlasting part of man and represents that which can never die; it is also the part of man associated with the male gender.¹⁵ On the other hand, the body, the flesh that will die, decompose, rot, and return to the earth, is associated with the female gender. An issue arises, as Cavarero explains, when “woman [*donna*] finds that she is a single whole of mind and body, and demands an adequate name” (6). It is here that the philosophy of sexual difference comes into play, and it requires a female perspective that does not exist in the origins of traditional philosophy. It necessitates a perspective that sees in woman a whole being, not one divided into two spheres. In her discussion of the figures of Plato, this idea of one whole versus two parts of a being will arise repeatedly: it also arises in the text of Rosselli’s *Anima*.

Heavily influenced by Arendt, Cavarero bases part of her analyses on the need to centralize birth within the symbolic order, in which the patriarchal order is founded upon a preoccupation of death, central to man’s existence. The physical man, of woman born, will die. Therefore, the body of woman is the vessel, seen not as life-giving but instead as a path towards

¹⁴ Cavarero expands this thought in *Stately Bodies*, in which she discusses the further corporeal division of head from body. This work will also be considered in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, as it relates to Rosselli’s last play, *Emma Liona (Lady Hamilton)*.

¹⁵ Throughout the entirety of *In Spite of Plato*, Cavarero explains, discusses, and clarifies these points. For the purposes of this dissertation, one must accept the summaries of her thought, laid out here, as the basis for the analysis of the plays. For more information, see the chapter on Penelope in Cavarero’s treatise.

eventual death. In the images presented by the ancient philosophers, birth is considered the binding together of the soul (eternal, higher understanding) with the body (heavy, cumbersome burden).

The mythical image of this tying together is the descent of the soul into the body which takes place at the time of birth. But birth is a fall, a negative event. This immediately turns the place of origin from which each person actually enters the world into a simple (and devalued) place of appearance 'on earth.' This place causes what is eternal, or what will eventually return to eternity, to languish with mortal matter (24).

Philosophers seek out death, or "the perfect untying of the soul from the body" (25). Ironically, in their works--which will define the patriarchal framework of society--the male gender becomes saddled with the compulsion to both risk death and stave it off in order to prove his manhood (24, 30). Cavarero suggests that this idea of death from birth is the governing thought in the process of the philosophical matricide which has been occurring since the origins of society, and which continues even today. This matricide reduces woman to the container that bears and nurtures man's progeny, with no other reason for existence: correspondingly, as stated in the citation above, birth is seen as negative and the female body is held responsible for this action. Due to a lack of scientific knowledge about conception and childbirth in ancient times, woman is also not considered a contributing partner to the reproductive process. She is first the vessel and then the caretaker who ensures that the child does not meet death too soon.¹⁶

D.2. Penelope – Impenetrable Time

It is with these two ideas – the need for a perspective of sexual difference and the desire to restore birth to the central position within the current philosophical thought – that Cavarero

¹⁶ This concept of woman as vessel, as well as ancient society's lack of knowledge about the reproductive process is discussed in Chapter 2 – *L'illusione*.

begins her process of stealing and reappropriating. The first figure that she confronts is Penelope, the seemingly-dutiful wife of Odysseus who awaits his return in Ithaca.¹⁷ In Cavarero's analysis, Penelope is anything but dutiful. She is instead the creator and mistress of her own domain-- unbeknownst to the men present on the island. In Homer's myth and in Plato's dialogue Penelope passes her days at the loom, surrounded by her handmaidens, weaving a cloth that must be finished before she can marry one of her suitors. At night, however, she unravels all the work she has done. From the outside, to the male figures who must look in from a window because they may not enter this "woman's" space, Penelope is in her rightful place, doing her womanly work. To the modern female philosopher who can enter this room, Cavarero sees a different story. In Penelope she reads the story of a woman who, through systematic weaving and unweaving, creates a space that is apart from man and an existence "untouched by the vicissitudes of men" (16). According to the patriarchal society to which Penelope belongs, she has but two choices: either wait for her husband to return or accept that he will not return and marry one of her suitors. Penelope, however, fashions a third choice that both the men who surround her and the philosophers who recount her tale fail to see. "For Penelope's mind -- almost a feminine counterpoint to her no longer expected spouse -- is a *metis*, an astute kind of intelligence that understands the situation and keeps it under control" (18).

Penelope creates a space for herself and her handmaidens from which men are excluded, for weaving is the work of women; in continuing this work, she succeeds in stalling--almost freezing--time. Cavarero calls this "the room of an impenetrable time" (17). It is in this room that all the women "belong to themselves completely and absolutely. Their sense of belonging comes

¹⁷ Cavarero points out that she is using Penelope who appears in Plato's *Phaedo* (*Spite* 22).

first, and this makes other things possible” (16). One of the things made possible by this separation of spaces is that Penelope’s life is made impenetrable to the patriarchal order (17). Inside her room, the weaving and unweaving continues among women in the company of other women. It is here that “this life is shared in a common horizon,” which “allows every woman to recognize herself in another woman” (30). This shared existence is very important to the discussion of a female subjectivity, and it will return in the analysis of Rosselli’s plays. In two of her dramas, she allows her protagonists to create similar spaces in which the women can separate themselves from men’s experience, and through that separation, help to define a new feminine order.

As Cavarero implies, this separation, this place of one’s own, is by no means a negative experience. It is a place where Penelope and her female companions are untouched by the matters of men such as the ongoing war and the struggle for the throne. It is, in essence, a place of liberation; or rather, a female place of liberation (16-30). In this room, Penelope does something extraordinary: she puts the body and soul, once separated by a patriarchal symbolic order with death at the center, back together again. To understand Cavarero’s interpretation, it is necessary to follow the weaving metaphor to its logical end:

For (good) philosophers, the absurd, the negative, consists in reweaving what they have unwoven. This is the case at least in the patriarchal perspective that Plato shares with Homer. For Penelope, obviously, the absurd consists in the opposite, in undoing what she has done. Nevertheless, something very interesting happens precisely in this inversion. If in Plato’s metaphorical word play Penelope’s weaving appears to be an act of retying the soul to the body, then one can see that Penelope turns the task of philosophy upside down (23).

With the passage above, Cavarero deftly restores to woman what the patriarchal tradition had stolen from the female figure: wholeness of body and soul. As a being capable of both birth and

thought, woman can begin to define her own space and recognize herself in the presence of other women.

D.3. The Maidservant from Thrace – Feminine Reality

The Maidservant from Thrace is the female figure with the least amount of “page” time, but about whom there is no shortage of figurations.¹⁸ She appears just once in Plato’s works and ever-so-briefly. She is not a main character in a mythological story but instead a secondary one placed in Plato’s *Theaetetus*, as an anecdote (according to Cavarero.) In Plato’s version the maiden, who is described only as “quick and graceful,” (31) laughs at the philosopher, Thales, who has fallen into a well. He was looking up towards the heavens, from where his soul would have come, trying to understand that which cannot be seen. As noted above, according to classical thought, death is equal to the permanent separation of the soul from the body. This separation results in the return of the soul to its original home, now free of its earthly body, to live among “things that have always been.”¹⁹ It is the goal of all philosophers to reach this ethereal place. This, in turn, promotes the belief that only philosophers can experience or glimpse this original home while alive: “In life, the agent of this untying is (pure) thought: the

¹⁸ Though her appearance is brief, the maidservant’s “anecdote has been taken up repeatedly by different writers down the ages...” Cavarero looks specifically at Hans Blumberg’s hermeneutical history, *Das Lachen der Thrakerin: Eine Urgeschichte der Theorie* (1987). (Spite 32-33, 130).

¹⁹ This phrase, “things that have always been” seems almost contradictory, as it refers to that which cannot be seen in this earthly existence. It does not refer to the continuum of life or the physical earth, but instead to all that surrounds it and exists on a non-physical plane. The soul comes from the place of “things that have always been”. It knows no life and no death; it just is. This concept must be understood as Plato and his fellow ancient philosophers intended, if one is to understand the centrality of death in the traditional framework of the patriarchal order. The idea of “things that have always been” is the beginning and end (according to traditional thought) of all human beings.

thinking part of the soul (*nous*) which can pull itself away from the body through philosophical exercise and attain contemplation of ‘the things that have always been’” (24).

It is precisely at this moment of contemplation that the philosopher falls into the well: the maidservant responds with unabashed laughter. Surely she should forgive his clumsiness and not laugh at him, because he is contemplating the great beyond. He is doing the work of the philosopher. She, in fact, points out the obvious--that in looking up, he fails to see what is right in front of him. Regarding the nameless maidservant, Cavarero suggests that,

the memory that tradition has retained of her has little to do with the genuine truth hidden in her laugh. Yet this truth is still accessible, if snatched from the text and stolen from its context. For subsequent tradition has in fact reduced the maidservant to an anecdote that is supposed to illustrate the inability of simple-minded people to understand philosophical speculation (31).

The crux of Cavarero’s discussion of the maidservant is the idea of reality. It is a very detailed and complicated theory that she lays out, but in summary can be considered as the “things that have always been” versus the things that are “close at hand”. It is those things which exist close at hand or on this earth, to put it more specifically, that are “devalued as merely superficial appearance” (35). The maidservant laughs at the philosopher and, through this action; Plato’s emphasizes the simple-mindedness of the female servant. In stealing this figure from him, Cavarero sees the maiden’s laugh as far more telling.

The laughter of a ‘secondary’ character in this rereading is representative of two very important ideas: resistance to the patriarchal order and a certain feminine freedom that comes with a knowledge unavailable to the male philosophers. This figure, who is first a woman and second a servant, is rooted--just as Penelope is--in her own reality (50). This reality exists precisely because she lives in it. As Cavarero suggests, it is philosophy that tries to undo this reality. Perhaps ironically,

The only hint of resistance (or derision) in the face of philosophy's negation of reality is to be found in the maidservant's laughter. Her laughter provides a hint of precocious intelligence, since she already observed while watching Thales the earliest decisive moment of this philosophical tendency. But her laughter also indicates an almost prophetic intelligence (36).

Furthermore, "The maidservant's argument is strong with the power of facts, with the power of one who belongs to this world where she has her roots and lives out her individual existence. She exists above all in a female existence, which has no locus of signification in the celestial sphere of philosophy" (36). In other words, the philosopher has stumbled into the maiden's reality where philosophy does not govern. It would be similar to one of Penelope's suitors walking into her room of impenetrable time and space. At the maiden's well and in Penelope's weaving room, time and space, and therefore reality belong to the feminine.

Finally, Cavarero discusses the freedom inherent in the laughter of the maidservant: "the Thracian servant demonstrates with her laughter an unrestrained freedom" (54). This freedom is indicative of her feminine realism, which Cavarero notes as being anchored in facts. Cavarero also makes it clear that the maidservant, though not "destined to daily toil" as history would have us believe, is a "pathetic figure, she does not represent the passive docility of female oppression. She is a figure bursting with laughter, and her laughter serves as a frame for a few incisive words of wisdom" (54).

Cavarero builds a case here for a feminine reality based on the experiences and daily lives of women; in this case, that of a beautiful servant girl. In this very brief Platonic anecdote, Cavarero gives this female figure and, in turn, all female figures the right to exist in her own reality, free from the confines of a patriarchal society. Though the myth of the Maidservant is not applicable to the plays in this research, understanding Cavarero's rereading of it is important to understanding the political thought at the foundations of the patriarchal order in which Rosselli

and her characters lived. Furthermore, Cavarero's discussion of what always is and what has always been is indispensable to the topic at hand.

D.4. Demeter – Maternal Power

In the myth of Demeter, Adriana Cavarero sets up the argument that is most applicable to all of the plays in this dissertation. Demeter is also perhaps the most famous female mythical figure that the philosopher reappropriates, with the most well-known story. Her rereading is truly brilliant, yet it has been overlooked because of the tradition that encompasses it. In this myth, Demeter's daughter is stolen and, through the assistance of other male figures, taken to Hades' underworld in order to be his bride and the mother of his children. The traditional reading of this myth is a classic metaphor for the changing of the seasons on Earth. Demeter cannot bear to be without her daughter and while she is away from her the mother of all nature ceases to reproduce. It is only when Demeter's daughter is periodically returned to her that growth begins again. This is the perfect agricultural metaphor and has been interpreted as such since its writing. Cavarero explains how this metaphor fits in flawlessly with the patriarchal order of thought, and thus erases the truth of the myth.

Cavarero reminds us that Demeter is a name given by the ancient Greeks to indicate "the Great Mother" and furthermore, according to other scholars, she possesses "the secret of life and fertility" (57). The problem with Plato's dialogue is that Demeter is immediately robbed of that which makes her powerful:

In Plato's pun on the words giving (*didousa*) and mother (*meter*), then, this original meaning has already been lost. Here the mother is a nurturing creature: she gives food and with it she cares for and protects life. However, she is neither the source of life nor the repository of a secret passed on to the whole living cosmos 'at her discretion' (57).

In the agricultural/patriarchal understanding of the myth of Demeter, she has little to do with actual reproduction. It is the seed that travels underground to the dark world of Hades in order to be regenerated, rooted, and reborn/grow in the “warm light” of the Mother/Demeter (58). There is one essential problem that history has forgotten, which Cavarero points out to the reader. In the myth, Demeter does not reproduce while her daughter is out of her sight. This is the crux of Cavarero’s rereading.

Indeed, the central theme of the myth, apart from its agricultural interpretation, is the power of the mother, which is inscribed in all of nature as the power both to generate and not to generate. This is an absolute power that presides over the place from which humans come into the world and over nothingness, as birth-no-more, the endpoint of the maternal continuum which also marks symbolically the end of the world (59).

In this respect, maternity is “the matrix of the arrival of humans into the world” (59). This absolute power to choose generation or non-generation is what the traditional reading of Demeter’s myth robs not only from the Great Mother, but also from all women. In the myth, Hades does not consent to return Kore (Demeter’s daughter) to her mother until he sees Demeter’s true/absolute power. This power is not only the power to stop regenerating, it is also the power to stop regenerating to the point of threatening “the existence of humankind and the world” (59). It is this realization – that the female figure of Demeter has the absolute power to extinguish life on earth – that convinces Hades to return Kore to her mother on a periodic basis. It is precisely during these moments that Demeter *chooses* to regenerate. She chooses to regenerate when her daughter is within her sight. Here, reproduction is not dependent on the male seed but instead on the “secret to life and fertility” that is specifically preserved within the female body. It is passed on from the mother to the daughter, who can but may also not become a mother. To that end, “Demeter does not *have to* regenerate. Rather, it is because Demeter generated a daughter, whom she kept close to her, that all of nature continues to flourish in its

own rhythms” (61). Cavarero expresses here the necessity of the reciprocal gazes between mother and daughter in order to maintain the maternal continuum. Without one or the other present, “Nature reacts to injury by coming to a standstill” (60).

With the concept of choosing to generate or not to generate, Cavarero restores truth to the myth of Demeter. She is however also building towards a very delicate topic of her discussion, that of abortion and the exclusive power of the female to choose what happens to, and within, her body. In this chapter, Cavarero devotes many pages to the subject of a woman’s inherent right to choose. In both *L’Illusione* and *Emma Liona*, the loss of the reciprocal gazes of the mother and child will be at the forefront of the discussions.

D.5. Diotima – Womb Envy

The myth of Diotima recounts the story of a wise woman, or rather, a priestess who is allowed to teach man about love. Cavarero points out that on the surface there does not appear to be any misogyny present in Diotima’s dialogue: “She is a priestess, meaning that she belongs to a sphere of knowledge where women are also allowed to speak” (94). However, we must remember this: Socrates recounts Diotima’s words of wisdom, which are ultimately Plato’s, on a stage where women were not allowed (93). Cavarero seeks to find out why it must be a woman who relays Plato’s ideas (93-4).

In order to answer the question, it is necessary to understand what wisdom Diotima imparts to the male audience. The subject is Love and Diotima’s advice, spoken through Socrates, focuses on two types: heterosexual and homosexual. During her speech, the audience learns that it is homosexual love, the love “between two men that constitutes philosophy’s erotic path, the route leading to the noetic attainment of the idea of the beautiful that constitutes the true exercise of philosophy” (94). Furthermore, it is heterosexual love that results solely in the

procreation of the human race (94-95). As Cavarero's previous chapters have made clear, the philosophical quest is the highest and noblest of man's pursuits. It is only through homosexual love that men succeed in "the reproduction of divine discourses, the 'children' of philosophers" (94).

Herein lies the key to patriarchal matricide and the reason for using a woman to deliver the words of Plato. Cavarero proposes the idea that Diotima's delivery of the speech results in the destruction of maternal power by a person of the very gender which protects and regenerates it. By way of Diotima, the patriarchal order has stolen and appropriated for itself the ability to reproduce. Philosophical Man has been given through Platonic thought not only the right but also the charge to mate with other men and give birth to new ideas. Homosexual love is not burdened by the need to continue the species and so this "Love unites the transient world to otherworldly eternity so that the philosopher learns how to rise from one to the other, thus finding his predestined home" (97). In this one dialogue, so much is stolen from the female figure.

Aristophanes further reinforces these ideas in his own myth, in which heterosexual love becomes a punishment and maternity, a negative (female) experience (95-97).

This in turn translates into a general lack of interest in the love that women experience, and also implicitly denies the power of maternity. A symbolic matricide of the first degree has already been effected here. Significantly, the deprecating attitude that equates maternity with mere reproduction goes hand in hand with the kind of attitude that reductively attributes the very origin of life to a strategy imposed by the will of the punishing Zeus (97).

The language and dialogue that Plato gives Diotima, as Cavarero points out, is of a technical quality which seeks a complete mimesis of women's maternity (101-102). The importance of this need for mimetic perfection cannot be understated. Plato is attempting a total theft of the uniquely feminine maternal power and seeks to erase it from female existence. As well, Plato (through Diotima) notes that the children of a homosexual relationship live eternally; they belong

to the realm of “things that have always been”. Unlike the children born of woman, they are not marked at birth with eventual death. Thus, Plato has also succeeded in giving these “children” of men a higher value in the universe than the corporeal children of women. According to Cavarero, it is in this very concept that Plato gives the game away.

The male soul can give birth to offspring of a very different kind, which cannot be overtaken by death. This immortal, even eternal progeny cannot be consumed by any kind of cyclic process. [...] But Plato’s position seems transitional, since it does not emphasize the figure of a woman as a castrated male,²⁰ and almost suggests the opposite, namely a sort of ‘womb envy’ which manifests itself in the masculine mimesis of maternity, with obvious complications resulting from the matricidal, patriarchal context (103).

In this way, the myth of Diotima can be read as the exact opposite of psychoanalytical thinking. It is not woman who suffers a lack, but man.

While homosexual love and relationships may be at the heart of this dialogue, the manifestation of this idea in the modern world appears in many different forms. As Cavarero points out: “In this regard, it is not difficult to find someone ready to concede that in the West knowledge is organized as a sort of ‘masculine club’ from which women are excluded, as has been the case with politics” (107). Politics, however, is just one example of the ways in which the patriarchal order has continued to protect the ‘masculine club’ to which Cavarero refers. It seems that what remains of the homosexual ideal of mating and producing eternal children is the ‘club’ itself. It would also appear that what binds these men together in their ‘club’ is the need to generate or to give birth to “divine discourses” as a means of appropriating the power that only woman possesses.

²⁰ Here, Cavarero is referring to the long-standing accepted tradition of female “penis envy” (103).

E. Conclusion

By connecting Italian feminist theory with theatre at the turn of the last century, this dissertation takes part in and contributes to the ongoing discussion of the female figure in Italian literature. Similar to the work of Maggie Gale, I propose to position the dramatic works of Amelie Pincherle Rosselli within a greater literary and historical context. The plays that I will analyze are virtually unknown to theatrical scholars or literary historians, perhaps with the exception of *Anima*. In truth, this play was most popular during its inaugural run and then, as is the case with Rosselli's other works, it faded from the public's memory. The analyses of these dramas, using the approach above, is my response to Cavarero's call for a "rigorous development of a philosophy, a history, and a discourse of sexual difference to counter the disavowal of sexed bodies in the long cultural history of the West" (Shemek 10). Through this project, I hope to unveil and reinterpret the female figure in Rosselli's works in order to serve as the starting point for a greater discussion of sexual difference in Italian womens' playwriting of the period, while filling a gap in a field lacking a strong female presence.

CHAPTER 1 *ANIMA*

A. Introduction

Amelia Pincherle Rosselli's *Anima* was first produced in 1898 in Torino; however, the drama in three acts was not published until 1904 (Amato 41).²¹ The author's inaugural play was considered by critics and audiences alike to be a masterpiece,²² and even today is widely thought to be her best overall work for the stage. In 1901,²³ Pincherle Rosselli entered *Anima* in a competition in which two comedies and a drama were performed for the audience and the judges without disclosing the name of the playwright--thus resulting in an objective, *blind* judging based on the merit of the work. Rosselli walked away the outright winner, with a prize of 2000 lire.²⁴ Amelia's first attempt at a theatrical production was an undeniable success. Rosselli and her

²¹ Anna Baj lists the first production as having taken place in Venice, while Amato gives the location as Torino. No other research that I have found addresses this discrepancy. Since Amato's volume is more recent than that of Baj, I have also cited Torino as the location of the first production.

²² Several sources refer to *Anima* as Rosselli's best drama: *Memorie* 114, Amato 41, Calloni 9-10, Costa-Zalessow *Introduction to Anima*, and Pugliese 2.

²³ 1901 is the date given for the literary competition in sources such as the *Una Donna Nella Storia: Vita E Letteratura Di Amelia Pincherle Rosselli: Tragico Tempo, Chiaro Il Dovero* [QCR 2012] (41), while Costa-Zalessow says that this date is erroneous in her 1997 introduction to the reprint of Rosselli's *Anima* (14). Other sources say only that Amelia won the competition with *Anima*, but do not give a date, nor is it listed in her *Memorie*. Since the QCR is the most recently published journal on the subject, I also refer to 1901 as the competition date.

²⁴ Amato 40-46. In speaking to Rosselli's character, Amato recounts a story, translated from French, of Rosselli's choice to donate a large portion of her winnings from the literary competition to the *Associazione degli Artisti Drammatici Italiani*.

biographer, Maria Calloni, often cite Amelia as the first Italian woman playwright.²⁵ Regarding this fact and her success, Rosselli says,

[...] – nel 1898 – con un successo teatrale strepitoso che da un giorno all’altro diede il mio nome una notorietà eccezionale. Avevo vinto un importante concorso per un dramma. Era la prima volta che, in Italia, una donna scriveva per il teatro. Questa circostanza e la tesi ardita del dramma mi crearono di colpo una celebrità inaspettata e piena di responsabilità (*Memorie* 114).

For Rosselli, *Anima* would be unparalleled success that would never be repeated. She blamed this on heightened expectation on the part of the audience and the growing popularity of moving pictures (114).

B. Background and Criticism

Theatre during the late 19th century was an art form that was slowly giving way to the cinema. In many ways, it could not compete with the modern wonder of film (Introduction *Anima* 11). Both Rosselli and renowned theatre critic Silvio D’Amico later commented that the theatre was in need of a change precisely at the dawn of the twentieth century, while contemporary playwrights began to work towards reforming the theatre (Brockett 421).²⁶ This

²⁵ Pincherle Rosselli was not the first woman to write for and be successful at theatre. However, Amelia was the first female playwright to win a national dramaturgical prize after Italy’s Unification. It is probably for this reason, several authors, critics and Rosselli herself, refer to as the first woman playwright, without any qualification. Though, it is necessary to point out Rosselli’s achievements, I believe this statement does a disservice to the other women playwrights in Italy, at this time. The way in which Rosselli and Calloni reference Amelia as the first Italian women dramatist seems to negate the presence of all those who came before her, as well as those writing at the same time. Some examples of successful Italian female playwrights are Luisa Bergalli-Gozzi, Gualberta Alaide Beccari, Annie Vivanti, Teresa Gray-Ubertis, Clarice Tartufari, to name only a few. An excellent resource on the history of women’s playwriting in Italy is Sharon Wood’s chapter, Contemporary Women’s Theatre in Ferrell and Puppa’s volume, *A History of Italian Theatre*. As well, an archive exists outside of Florence (Centro di Drammaturgia – Teatro delle Donne) for the purpose of maintaining and staging the works of Italian female playwrights. Unfortunately, even this exclusive collection intended to promote and highlight the works of women in the theatre does not preserve any works written before 1945.

²⁶ See Cronache 1914/1955 by Silvio D’Amico, specifically Tomo 1, in which he address the crisis in the theatre. For Rosselli, see her letter to Carlo Rosselli dated 13 Novembre 1932, in which she discusses the need for a theatre “interiore” in order to compete with the cinema (526).

movement towards a modern theatre is evident in all of Rosselli's dramas, even before she called for theatrical reform. An advancement towards a modern theatre is perhaps most obvious and important in *Anima*. Her stage works, in most cases, took a fresh approach to important themes of the moment. The fledgling playwright was slowly stepping away from the models of other Italian women dramatists of the same period, whose works are now considered "predictable, sentimental, and ingenuously plotted (Introduction *Her Soul* 45). She moved in the direction of Ibsen, creating works that focused on the home and family of the bourgeoisie. A patriot greatly influenced by Mazzini, Rosselli sought to examine society from the inside out.²⁷

Natalia Costa-Zalessow says that it is "surprising to find, at the end of the nineteenth century, a drama of the caliber of *Her Soul (Anima)*" (45). Giovanna Amato supports this idea by noting that *Anima* is "un nocciolo della psiche femminile dedita all'amore platonico, che sembra un diritto inalienabile tanto per Giacosa quanto per Amelia" (53). It is this very notion that separates Rosselli from her contemporaries and allows us to open up a discussion about the female soul within the context of the traditional patriarchal society. It is interesting to note that the first three characters to appear on the stage in *Anima* are women. Paolo Puppa credits Eleonora Duse with providing "a strong impetus to the widening of the range of female characters in Italian bourgeois drama" (Farrell and Puppa 226). As noted in the introduction, theatre in Italy was turning away from the predictable "happy endings" of Romanticism towards the Realism and Naturalism that had taken hold in France and was spreading throughout the

²⁷ In *Memorie*, Rosselli often refers to the influence and presence of Giuseppe Mazzini in the Rosselli family. In the first section of the book and into the second, she also discusses at length those people and beliefs, which influenced her politics. Her husband's family members were friends of Mazzini and Giovanna Amato remarks that they belonged to the "religione mazziana" (79). At various times, members of the Rosselli family assisted Mazzini in his work. For more information, see p. 108-111 in *Memorie*.

continent. According to Puppa, “the playwright of a united Italy is, among other things, a preacher and chronicler of *mores*” (226). Rosselli does indeed fulfill this role, as the author of *Anima*.

C. Summary

With an uncomplicated plot, *Anima* appears at first to be a play about love, but in reality it is a debate predicated on the tenets of Western philosophy, as will be discussed in the coming pages. The action of the play takes place within a two-year period and, unlike *Illusione* and *Emma Liona (Lady Hamilton)*, has a conclusive ending--which may be one reason why audiences preferred it to her later dramas. The opening act sets the stage for a philosophical discussion that runs throughout the play.

The protagonist of *Anima* is a strong, independent woman named Olga DeValeris, who is a successful painter. The action begins in her studio, where she is currently painting a portrait of a young woman named Marietta. We learn that Marietta has been in a relationship with another artist and that together the two had a son. He abandoned her, leaving her with the child and a tarnished reputation. Having nowhere to live, Olga offers Marietta a room (albeit temporarily) while the child remains with the wet-nurse. Olga is immediately reprimanded by Virginia, her surrogate mother figure, for allowing a woman of such ill repute to stay in the house. In Olga’s response to this, we hear the echo of Amelia’s own sentiments about caring for all human beings.²⁸

VIRGINIA: But what’s gotten into your head?

²⁸ In her memoirs, Rosselli often discusses her desire to help others. She believed in fighting for the rights of everyone, but especially for those of the lower classes (117). Amato’s last chapter on Rosselli reflects this very idea and as noted by its title “Vivere per gli altri, vivere negli altri” (Amato 115).

OLGA: Why?

VIRGINIA: Have her stay in your house with a reputation like that?

OLGA: Oh...What reputation? That she was Leonardi's lover?

VIRGINIA: Was? Isn't she any longer?

OLGA: The hero has vanished.

VIRGINIA: Poor thing! What scoundrels these men!

OLGA: I can't possibly leave her on the street, where she might end up...

(Act I, sc. 1: 50).

As would be expected, Olga is warned that helping out someone like Marietta could affect her own reputation. More important to Olga, however, is that Marietta not be left without a place to live: because the alternative, as the young model says earlier, is "There's always somewhere to go, if worst comes to worst" (50). We will find out by the end of the act that Olga knows firsthand what the worst is and she is unwilling to let Marietta be subject to it.

Olga is visited by several people during the first act including Giorgio Mauri, who is clearly in love with her, and later his mother, Teresa and sister, Graziana. Giorgio's mother was a dear friend of Olga's now-deceased mother and feels it is her duty, rather than her pleasure, to visit Olga. The young painter's single, independent lifestyle clearly makes Teresa uneasy. She tries to shield her daughter, Graziana, who is almost twenty years old, from viewing Olga's paintings--especially the nudes. Teresa is a staunch believer in traditional values and hopes to raise her daughter in a similar manner. She neither understands nor condones Olga's choice of subject matter. During this visit a discussion ensues regarding the modern versus traditional values of society, a theme that recurs throughout *Anima*.

Silvio arrives and the audience learns that he is the intended suitor for Teresa's 19-year-old daughter, Graziana. During the scene Teresa does whatever possible to leave Silvio and her daughter alone together, much to Olga's dismay. In reality, Silvio and Olga are in love and he wants to marry her. After some time, he has received the consent of his father. Olga is hesitant because she has a secret. Olga reveals to Silvio and the spectators that she was raped as a young girl. At this point one of the play's themes is exposed, as the protagonist states that even though her body has been tarnished by the incident, her soul remains pure. She maintains her theoretical virginity and innocence. This is not enough for Silvio, who believes her to be contaminated without hope for rehabilitation. As Silvio leaves he implies that, since Olga has already been used by another man, the couple could have sex if she wanted. This degrading and demeaning comment sends Olga into a downward spiral.

Act II takes place the next day. As it begins, Giorgio is giving his consent for Silvio to marry his sister, Graziana. The swiftness with which Silvio procures a new fiancée is disturbing, but not so much as his reasoning and that of Giorgio, regarding his sister's appropriateness for marriage. Giorgio praises Silvio's choice of Graziana as a mate.

SILVIO: No, nothing important. But, you know, the moment comes when you realize how empty your life is. ... Sometimes even a small matter is enough to tilt the scale, to make you scream enough! And so, seeing your sister yesterday evening, I realized that the attraction had been there all the time, although hidden; and...

GIORGIO: You stayed a long time in our box!

SILVIO: It seemed to me that her company was good for me...that ingenuousness, that freshness of imagination, all that purity, which we young men rarely come into contact with, impressed me, it acted like a balm on my irritated nerves...

GIORGIO: And in order not to regret it, you did not want to delay?

SILVIO: I won't regret it, for sure.

GIORGIO: Certainly, marrying a girl like Graziana, you'll have the advantage of moulding her into whatever you wish. And then...you know that the wife is always what her husband makes of her. (*Act II, sc.1:62*).

Later that evening, as Giorgio hosts a dinner party for his male companions, Olga arrives and shakes up the soiree by engaging the men--including a very distraught Silvio--in a philosophical debate about the value of one's soul. Silvio and Olga begin arguing, leading to the climax of the act which ends in a mock auction for Olga's soul. In an effort to save her, Giorgio wins the only thing that she truly values by bidding all that he has. In this one action, Giorgio also unknowingly saves himself from the misogynistic tendencies he discussed earlier with Silvio. Olga assumes that, by winning the auction, she must also give her body to Giorgio. His company leaves the couple alone so that Giorgio may collect his prize; however, as he is truly in love with Olga, he refuses to bed her and asks if he may court her. The second act ends on a positive note that emphasizes mutual respect over physical conquest.

As the third act begins, much has changed. Two years have passed and Olga is now married to Giorgio. The two are extremely happy together, which both attribute to a marriage of their souls. Silvio, on the contrary, is in a miserable relationship with Graziana. As she gallivants all day with other men and outright refuses Silvio's orders to stay home, he begins to reflect on the choice he made not to marry Olga. He begs her forgiveness and pleads with her to leave Giorgio and return to him. Olga's true nature is far purer than Graziana's and this time she rejects Silvio, as her soul belongs to Giorgio. The drama ends with the sound of a gunshot offstage, as Silvio takes his own life in order to rid himself of Graziana and forget Olga.

D. Platonic Influence

Anima is marked with the influences of Plato and Platonic thought from the very first act. This fact is neither disguised nor subtly referenced. Instead, Rosselli is very clear about her intentions. At the heart of *Anima* is a debate from which stems all Western philosophy, that of the soul and the body. The initial dialogue in which Plato is discussed occurs in Act I, scene 3 between Olga and Giorgio. What begins as a discussion about art quickly becomes one about talent, social classes, and Plato's thinking.

GIORGIO: You're too modest... Besides it's a matter of talent, believe me. I for example, belong to that class of individuals, so numerous, and so useless who feel beauty, goodness, and greatness, but who don't have the necessary ability to express these things in words, by writing, or by painting. I said useless; but then is that really true? You artists have in us your most fervent admirers and at the same time your most impartial critics; and criticism and admiration are hard to come by nowadays.

OLGA: But I do not admit to the existence of a class of passive individuals. They do not exist in nature.

GIORGIO: Forgive me, but in nature there do exist beings, bodies, call them whatever you like, which are active solely due to the cooperation of other beings, other bodies, and which achieve perfection only together. And can't this happen to humans? Plato believed it so...?

OLGA: Just a minute. He believed that the union of two perfect souls formed a perfect being, not that the two parts, divided and distinct could not separately perform a given job (52).

This brief exchange between the future spouses is very telling, however simple it may seem at first. Immediately, the reader/spectator understands that Rosselli has a particular level of education and is capable not only of suggesting a philosophical discussion, but also of debating it. Olga, herself, does not hesitate to correct Giorgio on his misunderstanding about Platonic thought. The matter, about which they do not agree, is whether one can be creative on their own. Earlier in their scene, they also discuss whether Giorgio could have become an artist in his own right, as he appears to have a good eye and understanding of painting. She blames his inability on his lack of desire to study, while he alludes to the fact that she could have taught him. There is an underlying flirtation in the exchange; however, it also speaks to their individual belief systems and personalities. Giorgio, a typical, entitled, only male child of the middle class believes that nothing can be done about the situation, as it is too late to learn something new; whereas Olga, an independent woman who was orphaned as a child, believes that “It’s never too late” (52). Olga is presented by Rosselli as the ‘wise woman’ with respect to Giorgio. Her wisdom is evident in many of her scenes.

The ancient philosopher is once again referenced in the second act as Olga, along with Giorgio and his friends, embarks on a debate caused by the mention of Giuseppe Giacosa’s, *I Diritti dell’Anima*, the play that Silvio will attend later that evening. The dialogue begins somewhat innocently with the characters discussing the plot of the play. Giorgio notes, “It’s rather a daring idea to propose that a woman can claim for herself the right to be unfaithful in her thoughts, as long as she is not bodily...”(68). The conversation turns toward a discussion of the body, soul, and platonic love--an idea promoted by other writers during this period, including Neera (Introduction *Anima* 17). Rather tragically, or so it seems, this scene ends with a frantic dialogue (which Rosselli tells us should be a “fast dialogue,”) resulting in the auctioning off

Olga's soul to the highest bidder. At the end of the scene it is indeed *sold* to Giorgio, who bids, "Everything I have!"(68). What is most important in this scene, however, is not the symbolic sale of Olga's soul but instead the conversation that precedes it, in which she, along with the men, discuss its value. This idea will appear again in the third act.

In order to understand the depth and richness of Plato's presence in *Anima*, it is necessary to turn now to Cavarero's *In Spite of Plato*, specifically her analysis of Diotima in Plato's *Symposium*. This will allow us to frame Rosselli's portrayal of Olga in reference to Plato's (and therefore Western philosophy's) understanding of the soul, Love, and the pursuit of philosophical truth. Diotima is never actually seen in Plato's myth, but her words are recounted by Socrates. Though the reasoning for this is simple (women would not have been allowed on the stage during this time), Cavarero questions the use of a female voice to deliver Plato's thought on the subject of Love. Her conclusion is bleak:

What we find at work in both instances²⁹ is a subtle and ambiguous strategy requiring that a female voice expound the philosophical discourse of a patriarchal order that excludes women, ultimately reinforcing the original matricide that disinvests them. But this symbolic strategy is even more significant in the case of Plato's Diotima, because here the symbolic matricide does not occur through the immediate dematerializing force of a blatantly abstract use of language, but rather through an evocative vocabulary based on the 'mimesis of pregnancy.' In Diotima's speech maternal power is annihilated by offering its language and vocabulary to the power that will triumph over it, and will build its foundations on annihilation itself (94).

²⁹ Here, Cavarero is referring to a previous discussion of Parmenides' goddess. *In Spite of Plato*, 94.

I believe that Cavarero's assessment of Plato's myth of Diotima can be applied in a positive manner to Rosselli's *Anima* in order to negate the annihilation of the maternal power and, further, place Olga in a position equal to or perhaps even above that of her male companions. Although Rosselli confirmed in *Memorie* and personal letters her disappointment with feminism and its mode of operation, she does find a way to promote the female figure in *Anima* and in the plays that follow it (Amato 60). Much in the same way that Adriana Cavarero freely steals from ancient philosophy and Plato, I will steal from her in order to defend this proposal of anti-annihilation.

E. Olga as Diotima; Wise-woman & Teacher

"A priestess and a foreigner, Diotima of Mantinea is a woman wise on the subject of Love and many other matters," begins Cavarero (*Spite* 91). The philosopher goes on to explain that which makes Diotima special is not her beauty or wit, but her wisdom--for it is Diotima who will "explain" Love to Socrates (91). It is important, first, to clarify the meaning of Love. According to Plato, by way of Socrates and then Diotima, Love is a divine creature that exists between mortals and immortals. "Love unites the transient world to otherworldly eternity so that the philosopher learns how to rise from one to the other, the finding his predestined home. It is precisely this quality of in-betweenness that makes Love a philosopher, [...]"(98). According to Cavarero, this divinity loves wisdom just as philosophers do.

In the first scene of *Anima*, a parallel can be immediately drawn between Diotima and Olga. As she is working with her model Marietta, the younger girl breaks down into tears and Olga, while attempting to comfort her, begins to reveal her wisdom--which she will continue to dispense as the play unfolds. In her essay on Rosselli's theatrical works, Giovanna Amato refers to Marietta as Olga's "alter-ego per tutto il primo atto" (46). Marietta is an unmarried mother of

an infant son, recently abandoned by the child's father. The moral juxtaposition of these two women and subsequent exchange between the two unquestionably assigns the roles of 'teacher' and 'wise woman' to Olga, the painter, as demonstrated by the dialogue below.

OLGA: You musn't be ashamed for having loved a man you considered worthy. It would be shameful had you *pretended* to love him, for a hidden purpose.

MARIETTA: Oh bless you! Your words console me. And I did feel it inside me, but I didn't understand...I did not know how to get it out...

OLGA: Poor Marietta. You know, we all have this voice inside us, which speaks to us, deep inside our heart. But it's difficult to silence the other voices and to listen only to this one. Be brave and if you need advice or help, remember that I'm here
(Act I, sc. 1:50).

In this brief exchange, Rosselli has succeeded in accomplishing several things. First, as mentioned above, she has set up the relationship between the painter and the model as one of teacher and student. Second, she has ever so subtly begun her criticism of Giacosa's play, to which Rosselli's drama was meant to be a response. When Olga notes that true shame is found in pretending to love a man, the author is clearly referencing Maddalena, the wife of Paolo in Giacosa's drama, who pretends to love him as a means to conceal her love for his brother.

In addition, in this scene Rosselli has elevated the discussion of love from that of a fleeting affair to one of a higher idea, as referred to by philosophical texts. Olga, in this very motherly exchange with Marietta, speaks of "this voice inside us" and in doing so makes the first reference in the drama to the soul. Although Rosselli locates this voice in the heart and not the head as logocentric thinking allows for, she is definitely referring to the part of a human that

transcends the physical (Cavarero, *Stately* 101).³⁰ Though Olga calls it a voice, Marietta refers to it as something she can feel and yet does not understand.

The fact that Marietta cannot understand that voice/feeling makes perfect sense in the context of Diotima's myth. Marietta, like Socrates, has not yet been instructed by her teacher. Just as Diotima explained Love to Socrates, so too will Olga explain it to Marietta. And only with this new knowledge will the model be able to not only understand, but also listen to and heed that voice inside. Olga is, in many situations within *Anima*, the keeper of knowledge. Again, paralleling Plato's wise-woman, she has been entrusted "with the kind of knowing that corresponds to one of the most significant points of genuine Platonic teaching. [...] philosophy understood as Eros and cognitive ascent, as the contemplation of pure ideas through the desire for the eternally beautiful" (Cavarero, *Spite* 92) It is not coincidence that Olga favors painting scenes of the classical past, or of the città eterna. This fact will quickly become a point of contention between the artist and her would-be husband, Silvio, who favors only the modern, pure, and unadulterated.

Marietta is not Olga's only student, further cementing her relationship to Diotima as a fellow giver of knowledge. As the play progresses, Olga will instruct both Giorgio and Silvio on matters of Love with diametrically opposed results. The education of Giorgio will take place throughout the duration of the play, whereas Silvio's education and understanding will occur only at the end of the third act. It is at this point that Silvio truly comprehends what Olga was trying to teach him about the value and sacredness of the soul over the body. He could not understand this without Olga's "teachings." Unfortunately for Silvio, unlike Giorgio, it really is

³⁰The location of the soul in the head will be discussed in this dissertation, in the chapter on *Emma Liona (Lady Hamilton)*.

too late to learn something new. Realizing that he cannot improve his own soul or that of his wife, he takes his own life in order to release himself from the prison of his own marriage.

F. Olga as Diotima, a Foreigner

Central to the idea of Diotima's role as a wise woman/priestess is the fact that she was a foreigner. Cavarero points this out in both the body of her text and within the footnotes. Both factors, her position as priestess and foreigner, allow her to belong to the place of knowledge where women can speak, as referenced to in the introduction to this paper (*Spite* 94). Further, Cavarero notes,

Critics are quick to emphasize that Diotima's identity as a foreigner and as a priestess seems to suggest the mystical roots of Plato's teachings on Love. This may be true, but the symbolism is nonetheless polyvalent. It is only when analyzed from the standpoint of the feminist theory of sexual difference that this symbolism can open itself up to interpretations that otherwise remain lost and ambiguous (127).

In *Olga* we find a similar symbolism. Whether or not she may be considered a priestess is up for debate; however, as previously discussed, she definitely fulfills the "wise and skillful" characteristics that Plato confers on his priestess (91). *Olga's* origins, as both an orphan and a city girl who grew up in the country,³¹ help define her as a foreigner. However, a stronger argument could be made for her quasi-alien status if the notion of foreigner is slightly altered. In the case of *Anima*, a better adjective may be 'otherness.' As soon as the curtain rises and *Olga* is revealed as the protagonist of the play, it is clear that there is something "otherly" about her. She is, as we learn, a successful, independent, and single woman. Costa-Zalessow notes, "la pittura

³¹ In Act I, sc. 2, Virginia notes that sending a girl to live in the mountains "might be healthy [...], but not very reasonable, if that girl is destined to live in the big city." It is because of this fact that Virginia believes *Olga* has the wrong ideas about the society in which she now lives, despite the fact that she is happy, healthy, independent, and successful. (*Her Soul* 51).

professionale era considerata inconciliabile con l'ideale della moglie Borghese" (Introduction *Anima* 18). The studio is her own and in it she paints what she likes.

Olga returns to Rome from the countryside as an adult with knowledge mysterious to her fellow Romans, both as city dwellers and as citizens of the widely accepted social order, following the rules that "without which the world can't go on" (*Her Soul* 51). The artist's otherness is predicated on three points: her childhood spent outside the city, her independent and at times reputation-compromising lifestyle, and her modern ideas, which question the very foundations of the patriarchal structure of society. Olga, because of her natural independence, strength, and wisdom, sits precariously on the edge of society. However, this position places her just enough outside of it to allow her the freedom to speak--similar to that of Diotima. This same freedom though is denied to characters like Marietta and Giorgio's younger sister, Graziana.

G. Separation of Soul and Body

In Plato's writing, which helped to define and organize the dominant philosophical order, much discourse focuses on the differences, values, and mortality of the physical body and the intangible soul. Cavarero explores and expands these two parts of the human being in terms of feminist theory in much of her work. The soul and the body are considered two separate entities. The soul, while normally light and immortal is chained to the physical body, which serves to weigh it down while one exists on Earth. The soul can be untied from the body only through death, at which time it will enter into an immortal state of that which always was. The body on Earth, with the soul trapped inside, encounters only that which can be seen. Only through the practice of philosophy can a human being glimpse the immortal while living on Earth. Throughout much of history this privilege is available only to men, as women were seen as the mere vessels who give birth and then nurture the physical form. According to this thought,

women are not only reduced to a function but they are also imbued with the blame for the soul being trapped in a physical form, because it is by way of the female body that all men are born. Furthermore, in the classical understanding of this theory, men are associated with the rational and thinking immortal soul, while the female is associated with the physical, imperfect, mortal body.³²

In *Anima*, Rosselli works with Platonic thought up to a point and situates her characters and their beliefs within the accepted societal norms founded upon this thought. However, it is Olga, as a veritable descendent of both Diotima, a leader of men to knowledge, and Penelope, one who unweaves what philosophers have constructed, who will succeed in separating her soul from her body while on Earth and not through death (Cavarero, *Spite* 29, 91-92).

The process for Olga actually began years before the action of the play, when she was raped as a fifteen-year-old girl. As she reveals her story to Silvio, in the hopes that being honest with him will triumph over his bourgeois upbringing, it is clear that this moment in her life was a defining one. Though we are not told Olga's age in the play, we know that she was still of a desirable marrying age. As Willson points out, there was "pressure on young women to marry quickly (preferably before the age of 25) to avoid ending up as spinsters, [...]" (9). If we assume that Olga is at least 25 when the play begins, then ten years have elapsed since her rape, which would have occurred around 1888. In some ways, she would have been the perfect target--at least regarding society's mores. She was an orphan, originally living in the city, now in the care of strangers; therefore, the only reputation that would be tarnished by her rape is her own. At this time too, "a belief in the inferiority of women was widespread" and rape was not uncommon (5).

³² For more information, see Cavarero's *In Spite of Plato*, specifically the chapters on Penelope and Demeter. See also *Stately Bodies* p. 100-101.

In fact, legalized prostitution was considered necessary in order to combat the crime, as Mary Gibson notes. “Possessed by a strong sex drive, men, especially single soldiers and sailors, needed an outlet for their passions. Prostitution provided a sexual safety valve who might otherwise be driven to seduce or molest ‘honest’ girls and married women causing individual ruin and chaos” (30). Olga would be one of the ‘honest’ girls whose life could have been turned into ruin and chaos, but she does not let that happen. Much like the early sketches referenced by Olga, in the dialogue below her rape was “rubbed out.”

OLGA: ...I made certain scribbles, oh what beauty, on a rock, a big rock that was near a pine-tree, opposite the house which served as a bench for my whole adoptive family in the summer evening. I can still see them: Papa Tonio with his pipe, Auntie Marta with her braid, and us children gathered all around, like little chicks. And every evening my masterworks were rubbed out...(*Act I, sc.8:60*).

This physical assault, like the corporeal, earthly body of flesh, is only temporary. Through her inherent wisdom Olga finds a way to rub out the etchings of rape from her soul, leaving it pure, true, and untarnished. She discusses her experience and philosophy with Silvio in the end of the first act. She begins first by expressing her own feelings of guilt towards the incident.

OLGA: Oh Silvio, the horror of that act committed unconsciously; the disgust with myself, the terror of others, and that constant feeling of regret and of shame, the immense anguish over the irreparable evil (*Act I, sc. 8:60*).

In this brief excerpt from Olga’s monologue, Rosselli addresses the social stigma surrounding rape, wherein the ‘sexual transgression’ of a woman could bring shame upon an entire family. As

well, the victim could then be forced to marry the violator.³³ Costa-Zalessow notes “Alcune delle idee esposte dalla Rosselli in *Anima* sono valide ancora oggi, soprattutto quelle che riguardano il trauma subito dalla vittima di uno stupro” (Introduction *Anima* 18).

Olga then explains to Silvio how she began to overcome this tragedy of her youth, by way of her soul. “But then, later, there was a sudden flash of light in the darkness of my childish mind” (*Her Soul* 60). The light that Olga is referring to appeared earlier in the same act: during a previous conversation with Giorgio. While he is trying to convince her that he is the only man who could truly appreciate and understand her, he says “There is in you some mysterious depth that needs to be respected; some surge of light so intense that it would burn the indiscreet eye of the unsuspecting gazer” (*Her Soul* 53). Rosselli’s choice of words should not be overlooked. In the translated Italian version of *Anima*, the similarity between the two phrases is unmistakable. The comparison of “surge of light” and “sudden flash of light” both speak to a quick light that is an active, almost living, thing. It is not a passive light; it is the very essence of life. The original Italian version uses the following phrases: (Giorgio) “fiotti di luce così ardente” and (Olga) “lo sprazzo di luce improvviso” (*Anima* 49, 66). Again, there can be no denying that the same light is being recalled. Additionally, both speakers note the depth in which this light resides, as Olga in her conversation with Marietta says that there is a voice “deep inside” us all, and later she tells Silvio about the voice that comes from the “bottom” of her heart. Giorgio, as well, speaks of this “mysterious depth” where the light resides. It is clear from Rosselli’s vocabulary that this light, whether defined as a soul or Love, is not easy to reach and is held tight within the human body. Rosselli situates it in the heart, whereas traditional philosophy situates it within the head. The

³³ Willson discusses rape and its consequences throughout *Women in Twentieth-Century Italy*, see pages 5, 19, 41, and 44, in particular.

specific location here is not as important as the fact that remains: the soul is bound by the corporeal body. In many ways, Rosselli protects Olga's soul in an impenetrable space similar to that of Penelope's weaving room. Both places are inaccessible to man without the express permission from the woman.

In the following monologue, Olga explains to Silvio the driving thought behind *Anima*. It is here that Rosselli will break with tradition and bestow the power to untie one's soul from its corporeal bonds upon the female protagonist, a trait usually reserved for men.

OLGA: And from the bottom of my heart the echo of a voice, confused and terrible, calling out to me: 'Why do you humiliate yourself so? Don't you still have something which no one can take away from you unless you want to give it away? Come on, lift up your head. You, poor crying girl, you still have a soul!' A soul!...A treasure all mine, that I possessed without knowing, a sacred virginity over which I had to watch. Ah, no, no don't cry. It seemed to me that I was able to see it, all white, all pure, innocent, and mine, only mine. And I swore to myself never to contaminate it. I had a maternal tenderness for it, a maternal pride, and I thought about the man who would receive it one day and who, as the first and only one, would write on it his adored name...Yours, Silvio, yours and no one else's ever! All my thoughts are for you alone. (*Act I, sc. 8: 60*).

Here, Rosselli touches on three important points. First, Olga says that she "possessed without knowing" something that was hers and hers alone. The notion of knowledge, seeking it, understanding it, and using it, is an idea specifically dedicated to men in ancient times. Cavarero tells us that the seeking of knowledge or truth is that which defines a philosopher and that through this quest he shall experience, albeit temporarily, the immortality that comes with the

freeing of the soul from the body. In this scene Olga gains a conscious understanding and awareness of her soul, the very concept that separates the philosopher (soul of male) from the prison (body of female). It is in that instant, in the surge of light, that our protagonist transcends from a knowledge of *that which is seen* to *that which always is*. She has become the wise-woman, the priestess, the seeker, and teacher of knowledge.

Second, Rosselli briefly touches on the maternal gaze: however, not for a physical child but for Olga's soul. Again, parallels can be drawn. In Bock and James's volume, *Beyond Equality and Difference: Citizenship, Feminist Politics and Female Subjectivity*, much attention is paid to the traditional roles of men and women during Amelia's lifetime. As well, Cavarero discusses these roles in terms of Plato. In essence, women are nurturers and educators of children while men are thinkers, both rational and active (*Beyond* 34). This model, which was antiquated even in Rosselli's time, results in one question: in the philosopher's quest for truth and immortality, is he not also nurturing and educating his soul, much like the physical body of a child? Olga's reference to maternal feelings for her own soul could very easily be those of a philosopher seeking immortal existence, of course with one simple spelling change—from maternal to paternal.

Finally, Rosselli reinforces Olga's new, quasi-philosopher role again by a particular choice of words. For the most part, her monologue is not sentimental—with perhaps the exception of her “maternal” references, which again, could be just as easily “paternal” references. In the final sentence though, Olga dedicates all her *thoughts* to Silvio.³⁴ She does not dedicate her *love* or *feelings*. As we know, her physical and now-impure body is no longer of any

³⁴ In the original Italian version, the word is *pensieri* and not *sentimenti* or *emozioni*. p.67

value, but that which she values most is reserved for Silvio. I do not believe that Rosselli's vocabulary choices were accidental. Even with a contaminated body Olga could have relinquished her heart and those nouns that belong to it, but Rosselli chose the word *thoughts*, which necessarily turns the discussion in a philosophical direction, not a sentimental one—further strengthening Olga's action of separating her soul from her body in the next act. Additionally, the use of the word *thoughts* anticipates the conversation about Giacosa's play, below.

The true climax of *Anima* occurs in Act II, when Olga visits Giorgio's home during a dinner party with friends. As Olga pays Giorgio and his companions a visit, a debate ensues that is a follow-up to the monologue discussed above. The debate is spurred by Silvio's mention of Giacosa's new play, *I Diritti dell' Anima*, which he will be attending later that evening.³⁵ In this scene, the men laugh off the playwright's work:

BEI: What a strange title.

GIORGIO: It's a rather daring idea to propose that a woman can claim for herself the right to be unfaithful in her thoughts, as long as she is not bodily...

SALVELLI: I think that's great.

BEI: Me, too. That way there are two different civil statutes: one for the body, the other for the soul. For example, one would read in the newspapers: "Today the spiritual

³⁵ Rosselli's *Anima* "was written in answer to Giuseppe Giacosa's *The Rights of the Soul* (1894), discussed in the second act of Rosselli's play. Giacosa is considered the major exponent of the Italian bourgeois drama of the late nineteenth century. His play had been influenced by Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879), in which Nora walks away from her husband and children in order to find herself. Giacosa's heroine also leaves her husband (but there are no children), in order to ascertain the right of a married woman to nurture a Platonic, or purely spiritual, love for a man who is not her husband" (Costa-Zalesow *Her Soul*, 46-47).

marriage between Mr. X and Miss Y took place. The bride's witness was her corporal husband Mr. Z. The groom's witness was etc. etc. The couple left for a Platonic honeymoon within the space of thought." *They all laugh.*

LORENZI: As far as I am concerned I would rather be the husband-witness.

SALVELLI: Smart Alec, my friend!

GIORGIO: And I...I would almost prefer to be the other...(*Act II, sc. 7:68*).

With this last statement Giorgio clearly reveals himself the better-suited companion to Olga, whether or not either of them yet realize that. He chooses the soul over the body.

Also interesting to this discussion is Bei's comment about two possible civil statutes as the result of the two different types of love proposed by Giacosa. Rosselli cleverly turns the exchange into a joke, but at the same time mocks Giacosa's treatment of the discussion and criticizes society's long traditional double standard towards the treatment of women and their bodies, especially in relationship to marriage (Pateman 19). While Amato notes that Giacosa and Amelia both agree on the inalienable right to spiritual love, she adds that Rosselli takes the concept a step further:

Ma mentre lui (Giacosa) lo contrappone all'amore fisico, peccaminoso se extra-coniugale, riducendolo a una sorta di 'riserva' spirituale cui è, al limite, concesso abbandonarsi, Amelia insiste perché sia l'altra meta altrettanto importante di un amore lecito, e l'unico metro di valutazione dell'integrità di una donna (53).

Rosselli bases the true value of a human being upon the soul, which was the exact opposite of how women were—and in many cases still are—valued. In her introduction to the Italian edition of *Anima*, Costa-Zalessow points out that Rosselli's drama: "esprime una vera e propria condanna di come venivano scelte le mogli nel XIX secolo: prima gli uomini si divertivano con donne considerate non degne di matrimonio, e poi sposavano ragazze di buona famiglia, ingenu

e innocenti, con l'idea di formarle, o peggio ancora, mirando solo alla dote" (18). A woman was considered a body, either pure or sullied, no more and no less. This is clearly reflected in the statements above as any idea relating to the separateness and sacredness of the soul, its thoughts or otherwise, is laughable. Perry Willson further explores this concept in her volume on women in Italy in the twentieth century. In fact, she begins by discussing the Italian tradition of the "honour code," which was more common in Southern Italy:

In the 'honour code,' the social prestige of a family, particularly the male members of the family, could be damaged by the 'sexual immorality' of their female relatives. This moral code condoned the killing, by fathers, husbands and brothers, of women who had transgressed sexually. An unmarried woman who was known to have lost her virginity was seen as evidence of the weakness of her male relatives, proof of their inability to protect or control her properly. In this system, 'reparatory marriage' could restore a family's honour and this potentially might include forcing a woman to marry her rapist. Although the honour code placed great emphasis on the virginity of unmarried women and the fidelity of wives, and essentially saw female sexuality as bad, it differed from Catholic morality (5).³⁶

Although neither type of morality allows for the separation of the physical actions from the psychological conscience; that of Catholicism emphasizes the internal over the external, whereas that of the "honour code" values the opposite.³⁷ For centuries, women have been valued strictly based on the physical as an extension of the moral, making it impossible to separate the *sins of*

³⁶ The practice of the honor killings is still common in many countries today, as is evidenced by the recent success of the short film, *The Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness* (2015). This film explores the attempted honor killing of an 18-yr-old girl in Pakistan, because she fell in love with someone that her family did not approve of. Perry Willson discusses the history of honor killings in Italy her volume. Although, honor killings or *i delitti d'onore*, are not usually associated with modern society, the tradition was not declared to be completely illegal in Italy, until 1981. Just twenty years before this legislation, one of Italy's most famous films, *Divorzio all'italiana* used the honor killing, in order to advance the plot of the movie, albeit in a comedic way. For more information, see: http://sharmeenobaidfilms.com/portfolio_page/girl-in-the-river-the-price-of-forgiveness/ and <http://www.mondodiritto.it/codici/codice-penale/art-587-codice-penale-omicidio-e-lesione-personale-a-causa-di-onore.html>. The tradition of honor killings is still relevant today. It is an important topic that should not be overlooked.

³⁷ Willson states that "The Catholic Church, instead, saw all sexual pleasure, for either sex, as potentially sinful. There was, moreover, no room in the honour code for the cleansing effects of repentance and pardon" (5).

the flesh, even in the case of rape, from the integrity of the soul. In *Anima*, Rosselli succeeds in redefining and restoring the inherent value of a woman's soul, despite this long-standing belief.

At the dinner party Olga convinces her male companions, save Silvio, to bid on her soul. However, somewhat in jest, they begin to bid. Only Giorgio realizes the true shame of the auction and ends it by offering everything that he has. It is clear that even his friends do not understand what has happened, for they leave his home congratulating him on his new conquest. Olga, too, believes that Giorgio will also possess her physically, but he does not. By not bedding her, Giorgio proves that he has learned from Olga the difference between the soul and the body and thus concludes the untying of one from the other. Like Diotima, Olga has taught Giorgio the essence of truth and love.

H. The 'Noetic' Child

From this love a child will be born, but not one of human form and this is perhaps the most brilliant aspect of Rosselli's debut drama. In truth, *Anima* lacks the children that usually come standard with plays of this era. Even Ibsen, from whom most playwrights at this time took their cues, includes children caught in the middle of the domestic struggle. Olga, the protagonist of *Anima*, is not a mother, at least in the traditional sense of the word. Since we are dealing with a re-examination of the female figure in the works of Rosselli, it is important also to re-examine this idea of mother and child. It is important to remember the words Cavarero stated earlier, "In Diotima's speech maternal power is annihilated by offering its language and vocabulary to the power that will triumph over it, and will build its foundations on annihilation itself" (*Spite* 94). As previously mentioned, I believe that in *Anima* Rosselli reverses this annihilation and she does so through the presence of the 'noetic' child.

The concept of the ‘noetic’ child is taken directly from Cavarero’s chapter on Diotima, in which noetic fertility is defined as “the reproduction of divine discourses, the ‘children’ of philosophers” (*Spite* 94). In *Olga* we find the equivalent of a female philosopher, however unlikely that is at the end of the 19th century in Italy. She participates in the activities of a philosopher, searching for a truth that cannot be seen and freeing her soul from its mortal prison. As seen in all three acts, *Olga* is more knowledgeable on the works of Plato than anyone else in the play. She not only knows his works, but she understands them and is capable of teaching them to others. The artist is the philosopher; therefore, she can produce noetic children. Moreover, I would argue that she is already doing so as the play begins. When we first meet *Olga*, she is creating. She is not procreating or raising children and, on this point, there is a marked difference. From the first moments of the play, *Olga* is placed outside or perhaps slightly to the left of the patriarchal order that predefines women’s “place” in society.

Along with the notion of noetic fertility, Cavarero tells us that the children produced would be those of a homosexual and not a heterosexual union, because “it is the love between two men that constitutes philosophy’s erotic path, the route leading to the noetic attainment of the beautiful that constitutes the true exercise of philosophy. The non-philosophical, or rather anti-philosophical role of heterosexual love is thus clarified, [...]” (94). According to Diotima’s speech a man and a woman produce a physical child, while two men produce a noetic one that will have an immortal existence, the very thing that ancient philosophers sought after. Cavarero adds, “Aristophanes unhesitatingly assigns a negative cast to heterosexual love” (96).

As the third act of *Anima* unfolds, *Olga* and *Giorgio*’s union is revealed a very happy one founded on respect for one another, as well as an understanding that goes far deeper than a physical relationship. However, they have no children, nor do they ever refer to this possibility in the future.

Instead, they are immersed in the procreation of a ‘noetic child,’ a book about to be published which is written by Giorgio and proofread and inspired by Olga. Giorgio spends much of his time on stage during Act III singing the praises of Olga and noting that, without her, the book would not have been possible. Given the evidence in the play, Giorgio is probably correct. For, while Olga could produce and create on her own (as philosophers do,) Giorgio lacked this ability.

As Giorgio recounts what has happened in the two years that have passed, he echoes in some ways the scene in the first act when he and Olga discussed Plato. His understanding of Plato is that only perfection can be achieved when two come together, otherwise it is impossible. It is important at this point to review Olga’s response, found on page 5 of this chapter. In the following monologue, Giorgio tells Silvio how the book came to be:

GIORGIO: Yes, yes, it’s true. I myself would not have thought it possible. It’s all due to Olga. In fact, I needed to be pricked, spurred, like a reluctant horse...Just imagine. It was a combination of things, one could say. One day, shortly after we were married, she cleaned one of my drawers and found among some old papers a draft I had written on that subject. You know that I had always written in my spare time. I threw down my ideas in whatever way they came to me, but then I let them rot in the drawer. Well, Olga read that draft and she liked it; and from that moment on she started to torment me, to tell me that the idea was good, that I should elaborate on it. In the end she said so much and did so much that she succeeded in making me cast aside my phenomenal laziness. I began collecting the necessary material for my work and, little by little, you know how it happens, I got pleasure out of it. ...And then there was always Olga at my side to advise me, to help me...Ah, to work that way is pleasant. She had a desk installed for me in her atelier. She would

paint and I would write....And now, after a year and a half of tireless work, I have done it. We are correcting the galley-proofs. It will come out in November

(Act III, sc.1:71).

With this, Giorgio shines a light on the nontraditional marriage that he has with Olga. Instead of molding her into what he wanted, the very thing he told Silvio to do with his young wife, Graziana, Olga molded Giorgio. Costa-Zalessow highlights this point, noting that men at the time believed that innocence and purity of the body was akin to untouched clay that could be manipulated into one's desires.

Ma le cose non sempre andavano secondo i loro piani. Alcune ragazze, che erano state tenute sotto severa disciplina dai genitori e avevano avuto un'educazione molto limitata, in seguito rendevano difficile la vita del marito, con il loro continuo civettare e con i loro interessi meschini, come fa Graziana (Introduction *Anima* 18).

This is not the case with Olga, however. Although she has, in her own words, a contaminated body, she is pure of spirit. The union Olga and Giorgio have is a perfect one, through which they create a book about art history of the 1500s—their noetic child that has the potential to live on forever.

In order to understand completely this parallel between procreation of human life and the creation of noetic offspring, we must turn to Cavarero's analysis of Plato, and specifically the myth of Diotima.

Diotima specifies how love is in effect “a giving birth in beauty, both in body and in soul” (206b). This statement is crucial since the image of parturition is immediately presented side by side with the distinction between body and soul. Childbirth is evoked with the technical term *tokos*, which indicates giving birth, procreating, bring a child into the world. The distinction between soul and body will enable philosophy to be defined as a birthing of the male soul and is linked to love between men” (98).

.....
Mortal nature tries with every means to exist forever (*aei einai*, Parmenides' principle!), to achieve immortality. And this seems to become possible through the reproductive act, which always replaces an old person with a child. Clearly, this concerns the immortality of the species, rather than that of the individual. To be forever, without change,

corresponds of the immortality of divine things that finds its true name in eternity. Earthly life is never eternal [...] (98-99).

Cavarero points out that the cycle of human reproduction is one that perpetuates “the species, not the individual” (99). Therefore, there are two types of reproduction: one that seeks to immortalize the species and one that seeks to immortalize the individual. On a smaller scale then, there are also two kinds of men.

Diotima distinguishes between two kinds of men. She points out that some are fertile mainly in their bodies, and hence ‘are more oriented toward women.’ These men participate in immortality through procreation. Other men are fertile mainly in their soul, since there are some things with which the soul can become pregnant and to which it can give birth [208e-209a] (100).

Using the citation above to analyze the characters of Olga and Giorgio leads to another interesting possibility: the facts of the script are such that in the first and second acts Olga is fertile in her soul, while Giorgio does not have yet the same understanding or knowledge. Following Cavarero’s thought we encounter the idea of a male maternity, which placates a man’s womb envy and mimics the process even down to the use of vocabulary; thus, as the philosopher claims, annihilating it. According to the ancient texts, however, this male maternity is only possible through a relationship between two men as explained in the following paragraph:

Indeed when a man’s soul is already fertile with such things as wisdom and justice, he seeks out the beautiful in order to give birth to these virtues. If he then meets a beautiful soul in a beautiful body, he attaches himself to the other man and ‘engages in many conversations with this man about virtue, about what a good man should be like, and what he should make it his business to do; thus he sets out to educate him’ [Symposium 209c]. In beauty and in love, the lovers thus finally give birth to and generate the things with which they were already pregnant, forever taking care of the offspring they have produced together. Because they have given birth to children who are more beautiful and more immortal, their union is certainly more intimate than the kind that produces children of flesh and blood [209c] (101).

This ideal relationship of two beautiful souls is reminiscent of the relationship between Giorgio and Olga. The very discussions that the two share in the first act and at the end of the second act

reflect topics mentioned above regarding the virtue, behavior, and education of a man, though they almost always contextually refer to a woman. Furthermore, the conversations that Olga and Giorgio have are unique to them, as Amato points out, adding:

Amelia sceglie Giorgio come l'unico uomo depositario delle idee più profonde e moderne alla base del dramma. In questo caso, l'amore lo rende profetico. Con Giorgio Olga è al passo, discute di Platone, lo sprona a cominciare a studiare, sa di essere un punto di riferimento intellettuale e ne è disposta e lusingata, ma ne rifiuta l'amore (48).

In the statement above, Amato cements the idea of Olga as a teacher or wise woman. Perhaps then, something else interesting and unexpected has happened within the pages of Rosselli's first play. From the evidence we have been given—that is, from the facts of the play—Olga and Giorgio have reversed the gender roles assigned by the patriarchal order.

It is possible to take this idea one step further, by referring back to the vocabulary used by Rosselli in Giorgio's monologue. When he is recounting how the book came to be, Giorgio says, "It's all due to Olga. In fact, I needed to be pricked, spurred, like a reluctant horse" (*Her Soul* 62). The words *pricked* and *spurred* could not have been chosen randomly by Amelia. In fact, they are two words that imply the domestication of an animal. However, in the case of *Anima* Giorgio, not an animal, is being domesticated by a woman. Furthermore, it is Olga who awakens Giorgio and not the other way around. At the most basic level she plants the seed in Giorgio, which grows into a book and results in their noetic progeny.

I. Conclusion

It is now possible to sum up the discussion of the body and soul in *Anima* by noting that each act represents a different step in the existence of Olga's soul. Act I must be considered, in the words of Cavarero, as the "preparation for philosophizing" (*Spite* 101). Act II is the symbolic separation of the soul from the body, which allows her to experience *that which cannot be seen*.

Finally, Act III is the creation of the noetic child who will render “its creators immortal, or worthy of everlasting glory” (*Spite* 101). Through this process, Rosselli negates the annihilation that Plato set in action by way of Diotima. In addition, she gives the female protagonist the choice to procreate or not, with Giorgio as the vessel/depositary of the fertility that already lay within her. The notion of procreation by choice will be discussed at length in the following two chapters, as both female protagonists confront their own maternal power that Rosselli, through Olga, has restored to all her female characters.

CHAPTER 2 *L'ILLUSIONE*

A. Introduction

The second play by Rosselli, *L'illusione* (1901), is a rather typical domestic drama that takes place within the confines of the living area of a recently estranged couple, Emma and Alberto Gianforti. In this drama the playwright looks inside the complicated patriarchal structure that sought to domesticate women and to which the protagonist will eventually say “no,” giving voice to the female figure at the onset of the twentieth century (Vegetti Finzi 131-32).

Throughout the play many concepts of Cavarero’s philosophy, as discussed in the introduction to this paper, are put on display. Most important to the conversation of *L'illusione* are the concepts of maternal power and the reciprocal gaze between mother and child.

Though written and performed years earlier, *L'illusione* was not published until 1906. It was considered by some critics, audiences, and even Amelia herself to be her least successful work, for two reasons. First, *L'illusione* premiered just three years after *Anima*, which was a great success and therefore created very high, perhaps unreasonable expectations for her next drama. The second reason speaks more to the structure and quality of the play itself. Both Rosselli, in her autobiography, and scholar, Marina Calloni, comment on this:

Avevo già scritto, due anni dopo *Anima* – quando vivevo ancora con mio marito - un secondo dramma, *Illusione*. Ma un po’ per l’aspettativa enorme da parte del pubblico, un po’ perché il dramma, di carattere forse eccessivamente interiore, risultava lievemente statico e nudo, non riportò il successo di *Anima*, per quanto molti critici lo ritenessero superiore a questo.³⁸

³⁸ Here, and in other excerpts, Rosselli notes that she was happily married to her husband, who even encouraged her in her work, while *L'illusione* was being written (114). Although she does not come out and say it, it appears that she is trying to dissuade readers, scholars, or critics from drawing parallels between her life and her works.

.....
La reazione non è entusiasta, e Amelia lo attribuisce alla troppa aspettativa dopo *Anima*. È a metà tra la vanità e il rispetto per i gusti del pubblico che *L'illusione* è l'unico lavoro che Amelia cita ma non approfondisce nelle sue *Memorie*, pur dicendo che la critica lo preferì all'opera prima (Calloni 55).

Rosselli's biographer unknowingly highlights a particular issue that occurs when dealing with an autobiography as a primary source in these situations. Along with the solitary review that exists about the first production of *L'illusione*, little documentation speaks to the play's original reception (Annali 17). What does exist, for the most part, reiterates the author's own comments. Unfortunately, one cannot always rely on the opinion of an autobiographer, as memory and perspective can alter the truth. Rosselli seemed happy to forget about *L'illusione* and to blame its lackluster reception on high expectations rather than a weak text, something Calloni notes in her work on the playwright. In the citation above, she hints at Rosselli's vanity as a possible reason for the neglect of *L'illusione* in her own memoirs (Amato 114). Rosselli's proud nature and strong personality are obvious in *Memorie*, and it is clear that accepting failure was not part of her nature. Amelia was not modest about her accomplishments:

I miei bambini godevano della mia notorietà artistica e ne erano orgogliosi. Rimasti, poveri piccoli, senza la presenza del babbo, concentrarono su di me tutto l'irruente affetto della loro anima infantile. Mi adoravano. Mi adoravano perché piaceva loro sentir dire, come una lode ad essi rivolta, che erano figli dell'autrice di *Anima*... (114).³⁹

If failure did occur, it was best to ignore it or forget it. In her personal life, Amelia's marriage to the father of her children, Joe Rosselli,⁴⁰ ended in failure and though she discusses it briefly in

³⁹ It is important to note here, that while in this passage she refers to her children as "the sons of the authoress of *Anima*" this is not how history will remember Amelia Pincherle Rosselli. Instead, most will remember and refer to her as the mother of the brothers Rosselli. This illustrates the notion that as children their identity was defined through Amelia, but as adults, they defined her.

⁴⁰ Amelia Pincherle and Joe Rosselli were married on April 3, 1892. He was a musician and wanted to spend time in Vienna. The couple spent four years there at the beginning of their marriage, after which they returned to Italy and settled in Rome. Around 1902, the two separated and Amelia moved to Florence with the children. They stayed in

her *Memorie*, she does not go into detail about the specifics of the situation.⁴¹ In addition, she often defends both her marriage to Joe as well as her choice to leave him and become a single mother of three, as in the citation below:

Ma la rovina d'ordine morale che contemporaneamente mi colpì, e che doveva lasciare una traccia indelebile di dolore su tutta la mia vita, era ben più grave ed irrimediabile. Mi decisi – penosamente – a separarmi legalmente dall'uomo che amavo al di sopra di ogni cosa al mondo, e il quale – strane complicazioni del cuore umano! – mi amava an'egli tuttavia, e sempre mi amò per il resto della sua vita, nonostante l'abisso da lui savato fra noi con le sue proprie mani. Ma io non lo ritenni mai tutto responsabile: le ragioni sarebbero troppo lunghe, complicate a dirsi, e qui fuor di luogo (112-13).

One is left feeling that there were certain things in her life that she just did not discuss, her own mistakes being one. However, the so-called failure of *L'illusione* was something she appeared to carry with her throughout much of her life, choosing to barely acknowledge the drama when she wrote her *Memorie* years later—despite the time that had passed and the fact that she had stopped writing for the theatre altogether after *Emma Liona (Lady Hamilton)*.⁴²

B. Background

Unfortunately, the lack of attention to *L'illusione* on the part of the author translates into a lack of knowledge about the drama today. Almost every discussion of *L'illusione* today is a two or three line summary of Amelia's own words and a brief mention of the only existing

touch and Joe remained a part of his children's lives until his death in 1911. Rosselli adds that just before he died, she had planned to reconcile and move back in with him (*Memorie* 107-113).

⁴¹ What is known about the dissolution of their marriage comes from sources other than Rosselli's memoirs. While, Rosselli blames the breakup of the marriage on moral, but mainly financial issues, Amato confirms that Joe was actually guilty of having an affair with "una cantante lirica." Rosselli also assumes some of the blame, noting that her own success may have fueled her husband's depression and disappointment with his career (Amato 41).

⁴² *Memorie* is divided into three parts written by Amelia and covering three different 'eras' of her life. Calloni adds an introduction and a follow-up chapter filling in the gaps in Rosselli's narrative. All sections were written at different moments in the playwright's life and long after the periods they cover. Calloni's introduction to the work explains in detail, the divisions of the autobiography, as well as when and where Rosselli wrote them.

review. To make matters worse, no thorough analysis of this play exists, though Giovanna Amato does discuss isolated aspects of it as part of her essay on Rosselli's theatrical works (55-58).

Rosselli considered *L'illusione* to be a work of an inferior quality and she mentions its static and unembellished character. Amato's assessment of the play is also negative: "tutto è troppo detto, in maniera quasi didascalica, e si sente la mancanza di quella capacità di calibrare la tensione e scioglierla con rapidi siparietti" (58). Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, speaks to this idea:

Again, if you string together a set of speeches expressive of character, and well finished diction and thought, you will not produce the essential tragic effect nearly so well as with a play which, however deficient in these respects, yet has a plot and artistically constructed incidents (27).

The weakness of *L'illusione* may be a lack of dramatic effect, which is one of the essential elements of a successful drama, according to Aristotle. The philosopher emphasizes plot above all the other elements of a play and notes that it is "the soul of a tragedy."⁴³ In this case, Rosselli's judgement of *L'illusione* as a static play could also be read as the lack of a soul.

The author actually does follow, whether aware of it or not, Aristotle's recommendation and observations about a successful plot: Now, according to our definition, Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is complete, and whole, and of a certain magnitude; for there may be a whole that is wanting in magnitude. A whole is that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end" (31). Aristotle goes on to discuss the idea of a magnitude, saying,

And to define the matter roughly, we may say that the proper magnitude is comprised within such limits, that the sequence of events, according to the law of probability or necessity, will admit of a change from bad fortune to good, or from good fortune to bad(33).

⁴³ Tragedy and drama should be considered as one in the same for the purposes of this discussion.

If one were to judge *L'illusione* solely on these merits alone, it could have been considered a great play. While Rosselli may be guilty of revealing too little through action in *L'illusione*, it does not take away from the important thematic concerns of the drama.

In *L'illusione*, set at the turn of the last century, Rosselli confronts female adultery within a marriage—which will figure into all three plays analyzed here.⁴⁴ Silvia Vegetti Finzi notes that female adultery at this time is considered a crime (135). It is not something to be entered into lightly, as it could lead not only to public shame but also to one's death. In the case of *L'illusione*, the act of betrayal sets off a chain of events which eventually lead to the end of a marriage. Almost everything about the plot of this play runs contrary to socially acceptable behavior for women at the time, and it may have been this idea and Rosselli's treatment of it that was unpalatable to theatregoers in 1901 rather than the lack of dramatic tension. As historian Zeffiro Ciuffoletti, says in his 2013 article for the Fratelli Rosselli Circolo Culturale, “*L'illusione* fu rappresentata a Torino, al Teatro Carmignano, da Teresa Mariani, una delle maggiori attrici del tempo. Segno evidente che si trattava di temi sentiti, ma anche troppo aspri nelle soluzioni stilistiche per essere apprezzati fino in fondo.”⁴⁵ Again, it should be reiterated that most critical commentary on *L'illusione* thus far stems from the one remaining review and a brief mention by Rosselli in her *Memorie*. Amato adds the following assessment about the play: “Tra quelli conosciuti al pubblico, *Anima* resta il prediletto degli spettatori, *Illusione* il

⁴⁴ In *Anima*, both Graziana and the wife in Giacosa's play commit adultery. In *L'illusione*, it is the protagonist, Emma Gianforti, who experiences a “moment of weakness,” while Lady Hamilton, in *Emma Liona* has an affair with Sir Horatio Nelson and bears his child, while married to Lord Hamilton. Adultery on the part of men is never discussed or even alluded to, in these works.

⁴⁵ Ciuffoletti, Z. <http://www.rossellipietrasanta.com/amelia-rosselli.php>

beniamino della critica” (Amato 78). In truth, the play is not as poorly constructed as it would seem from Rosselli’s comments, but it was poorly received by audiences nevertheless.

This fact is upsetting because, hidden behind a seemingly simplistic story, is the voice of the female playwright trying to reappropriate a place in both literary and political history for women. It is not to say that this play should be considered *great* simply because it was written by a woman; instead, it is important to recognize that the voice the female protagonist is a true feminine voice, which until very recently had always been written by men—and therefore not truly reflective of women’s own experiences. Cavarero tackles this very idea in her philosophy. Both Braidotti, in her preface to *In Spite of Plato* and Cavarero, in the book’s introduction, stress the point that the Italian feminist is completely aware of the fact that the female figures in question were written by men “and that therefore they cannot be taken at face value as the expression of a female voice...”(xiii). Can we assume though that the contrary would be true, that a female figure written by a woman can be taken at face value? It would seem that the answer is yes, according to the philosophy of Cavarero, and also yes, concerning the works of Rosselli. In the article “Contesting Constraints: Amelia Pincherle Rosselli Jewish Writer in Pre-Fascist Italy,” Professor Stanislao G. Pugliese notes that the author was considered by many to be a strong, shrewd, and severe woman (2). He goes on to remind us that she wrote plays “with strong, independent female characters (6).

Cavarero discusses the confusing of male and female voices when rereading the myth of Diotima, whose words are ultimately Plato’s and not her own. Here, Cavarero’s interest in the role of Diotima is “how the voice of reported speech creates the mimetic effect of confusing or commingling the male and female voice” (*Spite* 93). The same could be said for the works of male authors that previously treated the subjects of female adultery and infelicity in the home.

The words spoken by Nora in *A Doll's House* are the words of a male author. There is no denying this fact, even though historical documentation tells us that the character, experience, and language of Nora were based on the true story of the playwright's female friend (Jakovljevic 446). However, like the words spoken by Socrates, Ibsen is only relaying her story using words that he crafted. In the case of *L'illusione* and all the plays in the thesis, there is no commingling of male and female voices concerning the female characters in the drama.⁴⁶ The words of Emma are those of Amelia Rosselli, female playwright.

This idea of a female writer speaking through a female figure is very important. Following the logic outlined by Cavarero, it should be easier for a woman to recognize herself in the female figures written by another woman. That being said, one must also remember that Rosselli was, without a doubt, a woman living within the patriarchal order and so there is a fine line to tread with this type of discussion. As Professor Pugliese writes, "Amelia Rosselli represents a challenge to the traditional conception of Italy as a predominantly patriarchal society..." (7) and further, that Rosselli's works "force us to reevaluate the position Italian women had in the first part of the twentieth century" (1). It is necessary to examine how the established patriarchal order manifests itself in Rosselli's works and how the fact of her gender worked with or against this idea in those same writings.

⁴⁶ An interesting counter argument to this current discussion would be that of the male figure as written by the female author. In the case of *L'illusione*, one could spend considerable time looking at the characters of Verardi and Alberto, neither of whom are written as the classical heroic male figure of the past. A prefiguration of Alberto does appear in *A Doll's House* as well, in the character of Nora's husband, Torvald. Interestingly enough, Ibsen addressed the topic of women living in a man's world in his notes concerning *A Doll's House*: "A woman cannot be herself in contemporary society, it is an exclusively male society with laws drafted by men, and with counsel and judges who judge feminine conduct from the male point of view" (Meyer 466).

Two important literary works with similar themes preceded *L'illusione*: Gustav Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1856/57) and Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879). Calloni notes that Rosselli's *L'illusione* is a very clear reference to the work of Flaubert and also recalls an 1891 novel by Federico De Roberto of the same name (Amato 55-56). Flaubert's Mme. Bovary, whose first name is also Emma, is the author's attempt to "write a novel about shallow, unsympathetic people in a dreary setting, some of who make bad choices and come to an unhappy end" (Flaubert and Davis xi). Rosselli's *L'illusione* is instead a portrayal of an unsympathetic patriarchal society and the resilience of a woman who frees herself from its shackles. It seems that Rosselli's Emma may be an homage in name only to Flaubert's, as the play bears more resemblance to *A Doll's House*, especially concerning plot and character. Rosselli is said to have esteemed Ibsen: "The ideals that she passed on to them [her sons] were the imperative of moral freedom; a modern sensibility reminiscent of Ibsen, whom she admired; [...]" (Pugliese 4-5).

C. Summary

L'illusione takes place entirely on one stationary set: that of the dining room and living area of the Gianforti's home, located in Rome. According to the stage directions, the action takes place in the present day; since the play was first staged in 1901, that year should be used as the reference point for this discussion (*L'illusione* 9). The play is divided into three acts, with the first act taking place less than a week after Emma's affair. The second act occurs a month later, and the third a month after that. The static location, division of acts, and concise timeline are

essential components of Aristotle's rules of creating a proper drama through unity of time and place.⁴⁷

In Act I of *L' Illusione*, Rosselli establishes the drama's primary conflict and introduces the audience to almost all of the characters of the play. As the action begins, the Gianforti household is in turmoil after Emma's affair with someone she met while on vacation. The audience learns quickly that the affair occurred in the family home and was not an ongoing situation. No reason is ever given for Emma's affair except that it was partially due to Alberto's lack of presence in the marriage and in the lives of the children.

ALBERTO: Adesso lo vedo: adesso soltanto. Prima, ah, prima non avevo né tempo né occhi per accorgermi di niente (*Act I, sc.4:19*).

We also see in the relationship between Emma and Alberto a situation parallel to the one in *Anima*, in which Giorgio suggests that Silvio mold the younger Graziana into the kind of wife he desires. Emma, like Graziana, is much younger than her husband and also comes from a good, respectable home. She is a congenial and proper young woman, who *should* make a good wife. However, as Costa-Zalessow points out, these situations do not always work out, as they *should* (21-22).

As the play begins, Emma is staying with her mother in her old room while Alberto no longer knows how to function. He is a weak and insecure person, who is more concerned with the gossip of his neighbors, friends, and colleagues than with his own children. He is angered about Emma's affair, but at the same time he cannot function without her. Alberto continues to

⁴⁷ Aristotle's unities of time, place, and action were not called so until centuries later (Else 89). He discusses the concepts later interpreted as the three unities throughout his *Poetics*. For specific criteria, see pages 24-25, 31, 32, and 64 in his essay.

confuse love with having someone to take care of him. Emma's mother, Maria, and the housekeeper, Marta, are both trying to keep the home from falling apart. While Marta has taken over Emma's duties of childcare, Maria comes daily to beg Alberto to forgive and take back her daughter. At the same time, a family friend, Giulio Verardi, tries to help Alberto get back on his feet. By the end of the first act, Alberto concedes to Maria's wishes and Emma returns home. However, it is clear that the situation is not what it once was and will never be so again, as described in the last lines of the act:

EMMA: *buttandosi a sedere, con un grido doloroso* Ah, non è più casa mia! Non è più casa mia! Non è più casa mia !! *Scoppia in dirottissimo pianto.*
Cala la tela (Act I, sc.10:45).

The second act is one of unending stress and tension between the newly-reconciled couple. As it begins, Emma tries to be happy and reclaim her place within the family, even though Alberto remains in a state of perpetual depression and anger. During this act the struggle for power between both husband and wife, as well as that of the outside world, is evident. When the local gossip, Signora Montano, pays the couple a visit, she is anything but sincere. Because of this, Alberto grows increasingly more paranoid that everyone in town is talking about him. He believes they are calling him a coward and thinking the worst of him and his children, all because he took Emma back. As Alberto reaches his breaking point, he and Emma cannot last more than a few minutes without arguing. After a visit from the signora, Verardi admits to Emma that he is also in love with her. The two have a discussion that allows the protagonist to comment negatively on the society in which she lives, as she accuses Verardi of assuming that, since she has strayed once, she is likely to do so again. The two fight and Verardi will not be seen anymore. This scene is reminiscent of that between Silvio and Olga in *Anima*. Though Verardi

does not think the worst of Emma, she misinterprets his kindness as an advance—which ends their friendship forever.

The final act of *L'illusione* is, in many ways, a mirror of the second and, as it progresses, the roles of Emma and Alberto reverse. They remain this way until the last scene. Emma is now on edge, nervous and insecure, while Alberto is perfectly content. In this act, Rosselli introduces a final character, albeit one that the audience never sees or hears: Miss Wedding, the new governess. Miss Wedding has only been with the Gianforti family for one month, but her presence is felt by all. The audience learns that she has quickly, but without specific intent to do so, taken over the role of the *signora della casa* and as the play approaches its end, it is clear that she is meant to replace Emma (at least in the eyes of the children.) Emma, upon realizing this, confronts Alberto, who admits to hiring Miss Wedding in order to keep the children away from their mother. Emma now sees the truth of the situation and, on the heels of yet another argument, she calmly makes the choice to leave Alberto and her children, forever. Alberto begs her to stay, with the excuse that they cannot go on without her. He reverts to his former self, behaving like a child and collapsing into a crying fit while Emma walks off stage for the last time.

D. Public v. Private

One of the recurring themes of *L'illusione* is that of the public versus private roles of men and women, as well as public versus private appearances. The same theme appears in both *Anima* and *Emma Liona*, although to a lesser extent. In the aforementioned citation by Pugliese, he notes that Amelia's writings presented a challenge to the common notion of the patriarchal society in Italy. He goes on to say that, in reality, her ideals challenged "the patriarchal/matriarchal dichotomy in which the male plays the role of dominant authority outside the home in the public sphere while the mother retains power over familial relations, especially the

children” (7). This concept is at the very heart of *L’Illusione*, as Alberto assumes control over the children, or the domestic sphere.

Most aware of the question of public versus private is Alberto, whose every move seems to be dependent on what society dictates. To counter his character is Giulio Verardi, who in many ways seems to be a voice of reason and even empathy when Alberto can see nothing but disaster in front of him. As Silvia Vegetti Finzi notes in the volume *Beyond Equality and Difference*, the divisions of public and private roles at this time in history, especially in Italy, are already well established. They were part of the conventional patriarchal order, which the middle class sought to maintain and promote through the education of children, by way of the mother-caretaker-nurse (117-36). The spectator, however, must consider Alberto both a believer in and victim of a male-centered ideology. From the onset of the play to its very last moments, he is fully immersed in the tenets of the patriarchal order. Through this character, Rosselli is making a very important statement about the effects of the traditional, centuries-old system. It is not only dangerous for women, but also for the men who believe in it and nothing else. Conversely, Giulio instead offers a different perspective on dealing with the situation of Gianforti’s adulterous wife. In Act I, scene 4, Rosselli establishes their differences of opinion about society:

ALBERTO: Sto diventando ridicolo: è vero?

VERARDÌ: No, ma...

ALBERTO: (*con ira dolorosa*) Sì, sì ridicolo. Credi che non lo sappia, che non lo capisca anche da me? (*Ride amaramente*) Ah! Ah! Ah!

VERARDÌ: Se continui così, finirai male: te l’avverto.

ALBERTO: Come devo finire? Ho già finito, io. La mia parte nella grande commedia umana è esaurita. Vi ho sostenuto quella dell'imbecile...e ho fatto ridere. Basta. Che altro mi resta da fare?

VERARDÌ: Questi sono discorsi da bambino. Un uomo della tua età...(19-20).

Alberto's paranoia begins to show through, as the two discuss his return to work:

ALBERTO: (*ansioso*) Ma cosa dicono, al Ministero? Cosa dicono? Bada, voglio sapere la verità.

VERARDÌ: Ma niente. E poi, cosa devono dire? E già passata una settimana...

ALBERTO: Una settimana...

VERARDÌ: Figurati se hanno ancora voglia di occuparsi di te e dei fatti tuoi.

ALBERTO: (*con amara ironia*) È diventata storia vecchia, per loro. (*Pausa. Poi, con uno sforzo*) Va bene. Domattina ci andrò. E poi? (22).

Later, we see Verardi's true nature when Alberto tells him that he will let Emma come home:

ALBERTO: *trasalendo*. Sono stato debole come un fanciullo. Ma essa moriva, capisci? *Poi, fissando improvvisamente Verardi negli occhi, con voce mutato*. Giulio! Tu però...tu non mi disprezzi?

VERARDÌ: Disprezzarti perché hai mostrato di essere superiore a un pregiudizio? Gli uomini come te non si disprezzano, amico mio.

ALBERTO: *con voce profonda*. Ma...si continua a stimarli? *Verardi gli tende la mano; si scambiano una stretta* (38-39).

Alberto perceives the crumbling patriarchal order at home and his inability to *control* the situation, and specifically Emma, as his own social impotence. According to Verardi, Alberto has secluded himself from the rest of the world rather than face it. The audience always sees

Alberto looking out and hypothesizing about what others are thinking and doing behind his back, which leads to an interminable paranoia that disturbs even the closest of his friends *Illusione* 20-21). In the end, this obsession with public and private roles, as well as perceptions, causes Alberto to do everything in his power to separate Emma from her own children. He believes that knowledge of her affair will negatively affect his progeny.

In several scenes, Alberto goes into detail about what is expected of him (and all men) by society and Verardi introduces the audience to the concept of the “marito eroe.”

VERARDÌ: Già: perchè per il mondo, il marito eroe è quello che ammazza o che non perdona. Oh a quello sì, che bisogna fare tanto di cappello! Ma quando si dice il mondo non si è mica detto tutto, sai: ci sono gli onesti, e per essi...

ALBERTO: *con una risata amara.* Gli onesti! Dove sono? Io non ne conosco.

VERARDÌ: Ce ne sono, sì, ancora di quelli per i quali bontà e generosità non sono sinonimo di vigliaccheria. (*Act II, sc.5, 69-70*).

Alberto is obsessed with the idea that the society in which he lives and works may consider him a coward. He will never be the hero-husband that is his predefined role. This concept is a direct descendent of the myths that Plato and fellow philosophers have used to define a man; that is, his gender specific role. Signor Gianforti, like Odysseus, who Cavarero tells us is the male role model *par excellence*, should be looking towards death and not forgiving his adulterous wife.⁴⁸ In the brief monologue that follows the exchange above, Alberto reveals why he has mixed feelings about his own choices:

⁴⁸ In Cavarero's Chapter on Penelope, she uses Odysseus as the personification of Man. He looks towards death and is constantly in motion. He represents action and war, the opposite of Penelope's spinning room (*Spite* 22-25).

ALBERTO: Chiacchiere! Chiacchiere! Anche allora, ti sei riempito la bocca di parole.

Non te ne faccio mica una colpa. Tu sei giovane.⁴⁹ Toccava a me prevedere. Toccava a me comprendere che quando una moglie manca al suo dovere non bisogna lasciarsi illudere da false speranze di possibili riconciliazioni, ma occorre essere semplicemente uomo: cioè crudele, feroce. Ammazzarlo ammazzarlo come un cane, quel ladro che ci ha rubato la nostra felicità e gloriarsi di tornare a casa con le mani macchiate di sangue, agitandole come uno stendardo d'onore in faccia ai nostri figliuoli. In quanto a lei...tagliar netto, di un colpo, ogni legame. Ch'ella sia morta, per noi soprattutto...soprattutto se si ha la debolezza di amarla ancora (*Act II, sc. 5:70*).

This powerful statement occurs exactly half way through the play in Act II, scene 5. It is the turning point for Alberto, who realizes that, just as Emma has neglected her traditional role as a wife, he too has neglected his own role as a man. The comparison in the dialogue of a *wife* to a *man* is undoubtedly intentional on the part of Rosselli. While Emma is defined by her role, Alberto is defined by his gender. Alberto, in his own mind, can hardly be considered a man. The vocabulary that Rosselli uses in this mini-monologue speaks directly to the idea of *marito eroe* and the customary role of man as he anticipates death. Furthermore, many of the words chosen echo the idea of war and man's animalistic tendencies: *crudele, feroce, come un cane, gloriarsi, e onore*, to name only a few. The phrase "*le mani macchiate di sangue*" conjures up not only images of war, but those of the great tragedies of the ancients, as well as those of Shakespeare.

⁴⁹ Verardi is 35; 10 years younger than Alberto, but 10 years older than Emma. *L'illusione*, 8.

In *Beyond Equality and Difference* Carol Pateman writes that a woman's duty to the State was to bear and raise children, while the role of a man was that of worker or soldier, no doubt following the examples found in the classical era myths (such as those discussed by Cavarero.)⁵⁰ At this moment in the drama, Rosselli introduces a vocabulary that is akin to a battle cry for Alberto. By choosing not to physically harm or kill his wife or her lover, he goes against everything that society dictates. However, he now realizes that he could still punish her for not fulfilling her wifely duties. Alberto will try to accomplish this by turning his children's gazes away from their mother, thus causing a symbolic matricide.

E. Gigino's Gaze and Symbolic Matricide

In *L'illusione*, one can draw clear parallels between the philosophy of Adriana Cavarero and the choices made by Emma. The events of this play, as well as its climax in which Emma leaves behind her family, are determined by the protagonist's choices. Those of her husband are secondary and reactionary to that which she has put into motion. In the third and final act of *L'illusione*, Emma chooses to remove herself from the familial home in which her children, a son and a daughter, live. A traditional reading of this play casts Alberto in the role of patriarch and decision maker. Emma is seen as a defiant wife who, in the end, is a victim of her own bad choices. Alberto, by restricting his wife's movements outside the home and delegating the care of their children to a nanny, is well within his rights.⁵¹ Emma, as a wife in a bourgeois family at the turn of the century, should accept her *punishment* and carry on. It is clear from the onset that

⁵⁰ Pateman 19.

⁵¹ For more information on this idea, see Vegetti Finzi's chapter in *Beyond Equality and Difference* as well as in Willson's text, *Women in Twentieth-century Italy*.

what Alberto wants, even once his wife's affair becomes public, is the illusion of normalcy. Emma, however, chooses a different path and, like Penelope, she creates her own option for the future.

At its conclusion, *L'Illusione* is most comparable to Ibsen's *A Doll's House* instead of Flaubert's *Bovary*. While the Frenchman's protagonist chooses suicide, those of Ibsen and Rosselli choose to leave their families behind. However, in Ibsen's classic, it is unclear whether Nora is gone forever or just temporarily absent.⁵² In *L'Illusione*, there is more certainty in Emma's departure as a final act of self-liberation from her marriage—though her own future is unclear. Both Ibsen's Nora and Amelia's Emma leave behind husbands that are collapsed and crying. In all three cases each woman chooses to give up her status as a mother, echoing Cavarero's essay on Demeter, the Great Mother who stops reproducing because she and her daughter can no longer exchange gazes. The theory of lost gazes is complicated in the context of *L'Illusione* and requires a bit more insight into the myth as interpreted by Adriana Cavarero.

In Plato's myth, Cavarero reminds us that in addition to her daughter, Kore, Demeter also has a son. While Kore's⁵³ gaze is ripped away by Hades, her son instead willingly turns away from her, revealing a growing tendency towards the patriarchal order.⁵⁴ There is already hint of this idea in the third scene of *L'Illusione*, which serves not only to give the audience an idea of

⁵² The ending of *A Doll's House* can be debated. The final scene between Torvald and Nora leaves a small opening for reconciliation, if during Nora's absence the two could change enough so theirs could "be a real wedlock" (68).

⁵³ While Cavarero uses the name Kore, presumably because Plato does, Demeter's daughter is more commonly known as Persephone (*Encyclopedia of Greek and Roman Mythology* 391).

⁵⁴ "Nevertheless the entire structure of the myth is really held in place by an implied and unspoken turning away (dis-traction) of the son's gaze from the mother. To put it differently, one might say that the myth, as always happens, and here especially, is structured on several levels of symbolic expression. The myth narrates explicitly the exchanges of gazes between mother and daughter, which is forcibly interrupted by the abduction of the daughter by the masculine hand" (*Spite* 62-63).

what life was like in the Gianforti household before Emma's affair, but also to show the family's compliance with the contemporary social order. The brief dialogue occurs between the children, while their father watches. Gigino wants Lisetta to play with him, but she prefers to keep writing. He insists:

GIGINO: Vieni, ti dico! *Vedendo che Lisetta non gli da retta, strappa il foglio sul quale essa sta scrivendo e lo fa in mille pezzi.*

ALBERTO: *appare sulla soglia dello studio e rimane non visto immobile a guardare*

LISETTA: *quasi piangendo.* Cattivo! Cattivo! Cattivo!

GIGINO: Così imparerai. Anche papà ha fatto lo stesso con la mamma, perché scriveva le lettere.

LISETTA: Perché è cattivo come te. *Si accapigliano (Act I, sc.3:17).*

This brief scene is very telling: Gigino is repeating what he has seen his own father's actions. It also brings into question the letters that Emma would have been writing before the play began.⁵⁵ Were they letters to her lover? If so, maybe the affair was not a one-time occurrence, an error in judgement, a "mistake", as Emma calls it (*Illusione* 76). On the other hand, is the tearing up of Emma's letters just an example of Alberto's lack of self-control, allowing the audience to empathize with Emma and her lack of freedom within the home as Verardi does? Alberto certainly has no problem in the second act when Emma is working on her embroidery, but

⁵⁵ In Act II, sc.1, Alberto brings in a letter that was clearly addressed to Emma, which he claims to have opened by mistake. The scene devolves once again into an argument, as it is obvious that Alberto no longer trusts Emma. In the same scene, he accuses her of lying to him because she had taken the children out without telling him. This speaks to the idea of Alberto's need to "control" his wife and his inability to do so. Moreover, it lends another level to the scene in which Gigino destroys Lisetta's letters, imitating his father's actions. Obviously Emma's letter writing is/was connected to her affair.

writing letters is indicative of something else: a woman who is capable of thinking and communicating for herself.

Gigino's imitation of his father's actions is disconcerting. He is only seven years old, but he has already learned his place in the family and, therefore, in the world. Surely, he will continue to mimic the actions of his father as he grows into a man. In Cavarero's opinion, even the Great Mother Demeter cannot stop her own son from following the traditional path laid out by the patriarchal order. In her analysis of the myth, she notes that the gaze of the daughter is not the only one that exists, "Undeniably, the female gender is the site of regeneration for living humans of both sexes; the female sex, which is the same as the mother's, and the male, which is different. Therefore a dual order of gazes proceeds from the two sexes directed toward the mother" (62). She goes on to clarify that,

the myth [of Demeter] does not seem to thematize the son explicitly, nor the order of gazes between mother and son. It thematizes only the gazes exchanged between mother and daughter. Nevertheless the entire structure of the myth is really held in place by an implied and unspoken turning away (dis-traction) of the son's gaze from the mother. To put it differently, one might say that the myth, as always happens, and here especially, is structured on several levels of symbolic expression. The myth narrates explicitly the exchange of gazes between mother and daughter, which is forcibly interrupted by the abduction of the daughter by a masculine hand. But this narration conceals a withdrawal of the son's gaze from the mother, which, so to speak, might be regarded as 'voluntary and pre-existing' (62-63).

In the play's dialogue above, Lisetta is representative of her mother who was punished for writing letters. Lisetta is both mother and daughter, while her brother is both father and son, symbolically turning away from his mother by evoking the behavior of his father. This exchange supports Cavarero's claim that the withdrawal of the son's gaze is "voluntary and pre-existing." Gigino is completely aware that his actions are those of his father and, by acknowledging this, he is a willing participant in the system into which he was born.

While this is troubling to Alberto, his reaction seems to hint at the silent war he will wage in the second act against his wife. He comments that, “Ella aveva riempito i loro piccoli cuori di se stessa, unicamente. Adesso lo vedo: adesso soltanto” (*Illusione* 19). This is an interesting choice by Rosselli, because it is clearly not true. Though he may feel that his children hate him, the actions of Gigino towards his sister demonstrate the opposite. Here, the dialogue and the actions run contrary to one another. In keeping with the patriarchal order Gigino imitates his father, turns away from his sister/mother (Lisetta), and destroys the very thing that she has created (the letters). His actions should be not be surprising. The fact that Alberto misreads them speaks to his own sense of ego, something Rosselli establishes in early moments of the play.

This scene between siblings is, in reality, more troubling for Emma, who is not there to witness it. By the end of the exchange between brother and sister, representative of Alberto and Emma, Gigino has turned his gaze away from his mother—both emotionally and physically. This important incident occurs less than ten minutes into the play and without an in-depth reading; it may be difficult to see it as such a symbolic moment. Nevertheless, it is exactly that. From this point on, Emma will *never* be seen on stage in the company of her son. Alberto does appear on stage with both children, but Emma will only share one scene with her daughter. At the end of Act II Emma cries and holds Lisetta tightly, as if she knows they have little time left together. Emma’s primary concern, as well as that of her own mother, Maria, is always Lisetta; just as Gigino’s gaze, and therefore Gigino himself, is already lost to her before Alberto allows her to come home.

Gigino is guilty of a type of symbolic matricide, his young age notwithstanding. What appears at first to be a simple act of childish behavior is, in reality, a playing-out of the patriarchal order. In the first chapter of *In Spite of Plato* Adriana Cavarero discusses the

traditional order passed down from the earliest philosophers, in which the male and female are first distinguished from each other. The female form becomes associated with birth while the male form with death, based upon the presupposition that death is, as noted in the introduction, “the perfect untying of the soul from the body” (25). Cavarero notes, “What emerges is the persistent ‘living for death’ that constitutes one of the most consistent principles in the philosophical tradition of the West” (24). Later, Cavarero adds:

the philosopher abandons the world of his own birth in order to establish his abode in pure thought, thus carrying out a symbolic matricide in the erasure of his *birth*. This act of matricide extends to everyone, insofar as all humans are born of woman into a world of appearances, a world where they, too, ‘appear’ as they come forth from their mother (38),

and further, “within the symbolic order of philosophy, women are either completely absent, or they appear as naïve and ignorant persons...” (38). It is in this context that the greater implications of Gigino’s actions can be fully understood. They are not an expression of hatred towards Alberto, but instead a turning away of his gaze, an erasure of the vessel that gave him life. As Emma is absent during the scene in question, Lisetta can be read as her surrogate, since,

Maternal power extends itself between two sequences of infinity: the infinity of a maternal continuum that lies in the past of every human born, male or female; and the infinity of a maternal *continuum* that presents itself as a future possibility when a woman generates a daughter. Both infinities, past and future, origin and perpetuation, always exist through the feminine (*Spite* 60).

Therefore, in repeating the actions of his father and turning away his gaze from his mother, Gigino fulfills his role in the patriarchal order: he negates his mother and thereby erases his birth.

F. Lisetta’s Gaze

Cavarero states that the context of the myth of Demeter “speaks of a symbolic order of the Great Mother, defeated and effaced by a patriarchal society that twists its original meaning, but leaves clues of this distortion in the context, thereby providing evidence of the crime” (58).

In Rosselli's *L'illusione*, Alberto Gianforti effects the same crime on his wife, just as Hades does on Demeter. Though the cowardly and paranoid protagonist of *L'illusione* does not snatch the children away from their mother in a violent and obvious way, he instead embarks on a systematic dismantling/revoking of Emma's Maternal Power. Since Gigino turned his own gaze from his mother in the first act, Alberto's goal is to turn away Lisetta's from Emma in the final act. He accomplishes this simply by hiring a governess for the children. In the following exchange between Marta, Maria, and Emma, it is evident that his manipulation of the situation is working. The three women are discussing the new nanny:

MARTA: Di me non parlo; se faccio tanto di alzare gli occhi in faccia a quelle due creature, par che le sciupi. Dio liberi! Sa che cosa è perfino arrivata a dirmi ieri sera? Che non devo più dar del tu a Lisetta, perché è troppa confidenza.

MARIA: Lisetta incomincia a farsi grandicella...

Si sente una sonata di campanello.

MARTA: Non è mica una buona ragione per trattarmi così. Dare del lei a una creatura che ho portato in collo! Ci vuole il cuore di un'inglese... *Altra sonata di campanello.* Sentitela come fa trottare il campanello! E non c'è verso: si fosse in punto di morto, bisogna correre, altrimenti non si cheta più! *Butta, arrabbiata, lo strofinaccio sopra una sedia, e va nella camera dei bambini (Act III, sc.4 92).*

Whether or not Lisetta uses the tu or the Lei form with Marta is irrelevant. The fact remains that her mother is no longer indoctrinating her into the system. When Marta leaves the stage, two interesting things occur. First, Maria and Emma dismiss her complaints about the nanny being a product of her position as a servant:

EMMA: *seguendo Maria con un sorriso di piacere intenso.* Né anche lei la può soffrire!

MARIA: Eh la servitù... Tutti eguali. Non possono sopportarla, l'idea di dover stare agli ordini di una persona stipendiata come loro, e che si la servire quasi quanto la padrona (*Act III, sc. 4:92-93*).

The governess is only doing her job and, to a certain extent, Emma defends her—though she knows it is not an ideal situation:

MARIA: *sorridendo* Anche tu ce l'hai con quella povera Miss Wedding?

EMMA: *ironica* Tutt'altro! È buonissima. E, da quanto mi par di capire, conosce perfettamente il suo mestiere. *Breve silenzio.* In meno di un mese io sarò diventata per i bambini più indifferente della prima venuta.

MARIA: Non sei mica la prima che tiene in casa una istitutrice (*Act III, sc 4:93*).

Second, Emma divulges her true feelings to her mother, which is indicative of their own reciprocal gazes and the exchange of the feminine secret (as Cavarero calls it.)⁵⁶ The following scene between Emma and Maria reveals what is really going on in the home:

EMMA: *con tristezza intensa* Ti assicuro che stringe il cuore pensare come basti poco per far deviare da una mamma l'affetto dei figliuoli, specialmente quando sono ancora piccoli. Si crede di essere loro necessari quanto l'aria stessa: ma se t'arriva in casa una straniera che si metta fra te e loro, un bel giorno t'accorgi d'esser diventata una persona perfettamente inutile, un soprammobile qualunque, un oggetto di lusso.

MARIA: Sei di cattivo umore oggi, mi pare.

⁵⁶ Cavarero *Spite*, 64

EMMA: Ah, tu non puoi capirlo, perché fra te e me non ci sono mai stati intrusi...Ma credi che è insostenibile, la coscienza della propria superfluità.

MARIA: E perché c'è più occuparti dei bambini?

EMMA: È tutta un'altra cosa. Sai, la mattina, per esempio: andavo io a svegliarli, facevo far loro il bagno, li vestivo... Adesso tutto questo, naturalmente, non posso più farlo: vengono un momento in camera mia a darmi il buongiorno... Poi ci sono le lezioni, le passeggiate... tutto è stabilito, fissato con un orario inesorabile. Qualche volta sto ore e ore senza vederli! I primi giorni – specialmente Lisetta – erano pianti continui perché volevano stare con me. Ma adesso ci si sono abituati e così bene, se anche li chiamo qua un momento, dopo cinque minuti scappano di là e io resto sola, inoperosa dalla mattina alla sera (*Act III, sc.4:93*).

Emma is trying to accept the governess's role in her household but, in doing her job, Miss Wedding is also an accomplice to Alberto, whether or not she is conscious of it. The new woman in the play is never seen or heard by the audience: she is invisible. The governess begins to perform all the duties that should rightfully be Emma's, as the mother of the children. In truth, Emma is upset by this. The idea that Miss Wedding is unseen or invisible speaks to the notions of female theorists about the creation of a system in which women were relegated to the background and, while there, they performed their duties of educating children in general; but more specifically, "domesticating" their daughters (Vegetti Finzi 132-33).

The audience also learns that Miss Wedding has succeeded in virtually erasing Emma's own *work* from Gigino's memory and, therefore, any recollection of Emma, herself. This is Emma's last reference to her son:

EMMA: *con lieve ironia* Come sei gentile! Specialmente dopo avermi tolta l'unica occupazione che riempiva la mia vita...*Pausa*. Sai? Gigino ha imparato dall'istitutrice a dire buongiorno e buonasera, in inglese. Mi figuro che questo ti farà un gran piacere?

ALBERTO: *ridendo imbarazzato* Grandissimo!

EMMA: Anche a me, in compenso, ha dimenticato una piccola poesia che gli avevo insegnato io, un giorno. Anche questo ti farà piacere: è vero?

ALBERTO: *accarezzandole una mano* Cattiva!

EMMA: *triste* Molto, sì (*Act III, sc. 2:88*).

Emma will eventually become the invisible woman in her children's lives.

Her lamentation of the fact that Alberto has taken away "l'unica occupazione che riempiva" her life makes a truly feminist reading of this play (and, in particular, this scene) difficult. This is one of the very issues at the heart of feminist theory. One of the themes of *Beyond Equality and Difference* is the paradox that women are singled out and even heralded for their unique ability to bear children, but it is this very difference, upon which inequality is predicated. Pateman notes "Women's political standing rests on a major paradox; they have been excluded and included on the basis of the very same capacities and attributes" (19). It will be a problem for Emma. She lives in a society where "within the middle classes, the difference between the sexes remained unchanged" (Vegetti Finzi 132) and where the structure for such difference has been long imbedded into the collective unconscious:

Thus, within the theoretical framework of Aristotelianism, female sexual difference marks a role of dependence on the adult male which corresponds to the confinement of women to their natural place, the private sphere of the household. Moreover, the rational nature of the adult male gives him a capacity to command and impose order; thus, as well as occupying the political sphere he also, as master dominates woman in the domestic sphere (Cavarero, *Beyond* 34).

In reality, when Emma discusses the desire to take her children for a walk, she refers to it as something that feels natural; she too has been educated, without realizing it, in the same “cult of domesticity” that Alba Amoia discusses in her text.⁵⁷

In the first two acts of *L'illusione* Alberto loses control of his wife and family, while in the third act he tries to rectify the situation. He is, by all accounts, within his rights to do so, both as a father and as a husband. Cavarero notes a certain early-held patriarchal understanding of the reproduction process that existed before the biological sciences, which led societies to believe that women had no physical role in conception and that all life-producing material came from the male. He then inseminated a woman and the child grew in her womb. There was no knowledge of the coming together of the egg and the sperm, with each participant contributing equally to the life of the child. Therefore, the woman was considered only a vessel, a carrier for the man's offspring. Cavarero terms this an “ignorance of genetics” (*Spite* 71). In the scene above between Emma and Alberto, the protagonist may not be lamenting the loss of being confined to her “natural place,” but may be instead lamenting the rights that *she believes* should be afforded to her as a mother and a woman. Cavarero notes that what remained until well into the twentieth-century from that early idea of an “ignorance of genetics” was the concept of woman as a vessel only without a right to her own body, or that which was growing inside of it. In addition, motherhood was later equated to an institution within the patriarchal society, to be controlled and

⁵⁷ In *No Mothers We!* Amoia cites a “cult of domesticity” prevalent in the nineteenth century: “Wifehood and motherhood are thus the single aim of the nineteenth-century heroine, who typically is ushered through her season of glory with the preparation of the dowry, the sacred marriage, the birth of eagerly awaited first child, and then of subsequent children who will guarantee her sacrificial self-annihilation”(62). She goes on to add that “Throughout the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century, women's literature was dominated by authors of aggressively conventional outlook and vigorous opposition to divorce or, indeed, anything that threatened to alleviate the feminine condition” (65).

legislated (Benedetti 28). Emma is left with little ground to stand on, not only because she was a woman, but also because she was a woman who committed the crime of adultery. Amato notes that throughout the course of the play, Emma is stripped of all her rights, “era già stata cacciata di casa e poi ‘ripresa’ a patto di considerarsi una prostituta, e spogliata di tutti i diritti materni e sociali” (56). She is emblematic not only of a woman seeking her rights as a mother but, primarily, her rights as an individual.

In Act II of *L'illusione* the desperation of the situation and the veritable imprisonment of Emma become clear. In the same scene with Alberto she alludes to the fact that he has kept her a prisoner in their home and, in a subsequent dialogue, her own mother tells her that she must pay the price for her indiscretion. In the final act she notes a freedom that she has never had before; however, that freedom does not include her children. In reality, Alberto no longer seeks to control Emma but only her access to the children, which as shown in the myth of Demeter can be the greatest of all punishments for a mother—resulting in the cessation of all reproduction.⁵⁸ The ever-changing situation in the Gianforti home becomes clear by comparing two dialogues from the second and third acts.

In the second act, Alberto was concerned that Emma was lying to him simply because she had changed her mind. After prodding Emma about her day, the following discussion takes place between the couple:

EMMA: Sono uscita un momento dopo colazione.

ALBERTO: Ah! Coi bambini?

⁵⁸ Given society's view on single women at the time, let alone adulterous females, it is highly unlikely that Emma would be able to recover her reputation and remarry after leaving Alberto. Her future would likely be that of a single woman and the chances of her having more children would be low. I would argue that by leaving Alberto, she accepts this probable future and therefore, is choosing to reproduce no more.

EMMA: Sì.

ALBERTO: *leggermente contrariato* Perché non li hai mandati con Marta?

EMMA: Perché trovo più naturale ch'essi escano con me.

ALBERTO: *con lieve sforzo* Certamente. E...dove siete stati?

EMMA: Dovevo sbrigare due o tre commissioni.

ALBERTO: Curioso. A me avevi detto che saresti rimasta in casa.

EMMA: Così volevo fare, infatti: ma poi...

ALBERTO: Ti sei pentita.

EMMA: Erano tre giorni che non mettevo piede fuori di casa.

ALBERTO: Vuoi forse dire che t'impedisco io di uscire? (*Sc. 1:50-52*).

He goes on to ask her if she saw anyone while they were out; from there the scene escalates because, as noted before, Alberto is troubled by what the public thinks or says about the situation. As the third act opens, the couple once again discusses Emma's daily activities:

ALBERTO: Perché non vai a quel concerto?

EMMA: *con un sorriso amaro* Hai una grande facilità ora, di mandarmi a concerti, a conferenze...

ALBERTO: Perché trovo giusto che tu ti procuri qualche distrazione (*Sc. 2:87-88*).

By the end of Act III Miss Wedding is now responsible for all childcare and Alberto is concerned only with the fact that Emma does not go out with the children, for fear that they will be contaminated by her.⁵⁹ After some encouragement from her mother, Emma asks the governess to get Lisetta ready for a walk with her mother. She learns, however, that Miss

⁵⁹ Contamination is the word used by Amelia Rosselli to describe the situation in the home after Emma's affair. Emma later uses this word as one of the reasons for her need to leave the home she shared with Alberto.

Wedding is under orders not to allow the children go out with Emma. Miss Wedding, in her alliance with Alberto, functions as a protector of the patriarchal system. The governess does not empathize with the nearly-childless mother, but instead defends the societal constructs that defer control to the patriarch. When Emma confronts her husband about the situation, he does not deny his actions but instead defends them for the sake of the children, his children. Once Emma bore them, her role of mother became equated with teacher/nurturer. In essence, she and Miss Wedding were now equal. To Alberto, it matters not who raises and educates his children—only that it is done properly and without social offense.

In the early 1800s, the experience of motherhood was divided among several roles (procreation, nursing, education), all of which were played by different individuals, sometimes in different places. Around 1850 those functions were combined into a single figure: that of the mother giving birth, raising, and educating her children in the family home (Benedetti 7).

Of course, this experience of motherhood made an exception for teachers, according to Laura Benedetti in her introduction to *Tigress in the Snow: Motherhood and Literature in the Twentieth Century*. Teaching was an acceptable career for women as it was “considered in line with their maternal instincts and duties” (14). One author of the era even wrote about teaching as a way to fulfill maternal desires, and added that teachers were discouraged from having their own children, as it would take away from mothering the students (14). In the case of *L’Illusione*, Emma refers to Miss Wedding as an “istitutrice”; and so there is another woman, an invisible woman who is sanctioned by societal traditions, performing Emma’s role (*L’Illusione* 88). The only thing that Miss Wedding has not done is give birth to the children. Gigino has already turned his gaze away from his mother and, as Emma notes, towards the governess. In truth, the third act tells the story of the Emma’s loss of Lisetta’s gaze, which will separate mother from

daughter forever and signal the final blow to the reconciliation and *normal* family life for which Alberto once hoped.

G. Emma's Maternal Power

Cavarero defines maternal power as “inscribed in all of nature as the power both to generate and not to generate. This is an absolute power that presides over the place from which humans come into the world and over nothingness, as birth-no-more, the endpoint of the maternal continuum which also marks symbolically the end of the world” (*Spite* 59). In each of the three works by Ibsen, Flaubert, and Rosselli, the protagonists exercise this power by choosing to end their motherhood and accepting the permanent disruption of the gaze between themselves and their children. In the chapter on Demeter, Cavarero dedicates many pages to the question of a woman’s right to choose, with regard to abortion and political laws. The case of Emma Gianforti is slightly different, but stands on the same principles. At the end of *L’Illusione*, Emma will leave the home and the family she created with Alberto; the same home and family that she contaminated by committing an affair in it. However, before placing all the blame on Emma (who will pay dearly for her mistake) it should be noted that Alberto invited Emma’s lover into their home:

MARTA: Ah signor Verardi! Mi par di sognare. Chi l’avrebbe mai detto!...Che cosa mancava, in questa casa? Sposati da otto anni, e parevano sposi d’ieri. Mai una parola dura, fra loro: mai. Il padrone, poi, l’adorava in ginocchio, la signora. Tutto quel che faceva lei era ben fatto. Già, Lei lo sa meglio di me. E anche la signora pareva che gli fosse tanto affezionata. Invece! Gesù mio! Non ci posso pensare (*Act I, sc. I:14*).

And later:

MARTA: Giorgio, vuol dire. Lo aveva conosciuto laggiù è vero? Io non lo so, ma me lo sono subito immaginato perché, prima di quel maledetto viaggio, la sua faccia non l'avevo mai vista. E con quali arti era riuscito a farsi ricevere qui in casa!...Ah che imprudenza da parte dei padrone! Non lo capiva che era come mettere la paglia accanto al fuoco? E ora, chi ne va di mezzo...*addita i bambini (Act I, sc.1:15).*

Verardi and Emma's mother both ask Alberto on several occasions to forgive Emma, since he is not completely innocent. He is incapable of doing so and instead creates an impossible situation for everyone in the house. He spends most of the play worrying about how his neighbors, colleagues, and passers-by will view him. Will they consider him a coward for bringing Emma home and trying to reconcile? When it is clear that reconciliation cannot happen, he works towards a situation that he believes is an acceptable compromise to Emma. Compromise, though acceptable to Demeter when she agreed to let Kore stay with Hades for a few months every year, is not acceptable to Emma.

Initially, the character of Emma is somewhat unclear and in many ways one-dimensional. It is not until someone takes away her *creatures* that she rises above the typical woman/mother of the early twentieth-century. The idea of Emma having a lover, though not morally correct at the time, was not altogether unheard of. Rosselli provides another example in the character of Signora Montano:

EMMA: *agitatissima* Ch'ella creda di potermi impunemente offendere così, ella, di cui tutta Roma sa che muta amanti come muta d'abiti!

VERARDÌ: Appunto per questo. No, no, sul serio: credo veramente che si tratti di un equivoco. Sarebbe assurdo (*Act II, sc. 7:73*).

The problem with Emma, however, is more likely one of being both a sexual being and a mother in this particular era and social structure.⁶⁰ In *Beyond Equality and Difference*, Silvia Vegetti Finzi traces the history of this idea, of a woman's sexual prowess versus motherly responsibility: "...it was now her very sexuality that was held to be potentially dangerous" (133-34). As well, Vegetti Finzi notes a marked separation between the psychological – the erotic, and the maternal – and the gynecological/natural aspects of the body. She also confirms the notion of pre- or extramarital affairs as crimes (135). Emma, it would seem at least according to Alberto, can no longer be both a sexual subject and a mother. As she chose to be unfaithful, something her mother calls "un momento di debolezza," (*L'illusione* 30) so too she must now choose to relinquish her role as a mother—at least in terms of educating and raising her children. At the end, Alberto begs Emma to stay with the family.

ALBERTO: Ah se tu sapessi quante volte, quando tu, poveretta, cercavi in loro il tuo rifugio, la tua felicità: se tu sapessi quante volte sono stato lì, lì per gettarmi fra te e loro, per strapparteli dalle braccia!...Emma! Emma mia! Perdonami! sono stato ingiusto, cattivo, crudele...Ma tu *con angoscia* non dire che te ne andrai. Come faremo senza di te? Tu sola, tu sola sei il nostro sorriso, la nostra gioia! Devi restare qui, sempre qui con noi! Sempre, sempre...*Si risollewa, la stringe a se disperatamente.*

EMMA: *sciogliendosi dalla stretta, triste e fiera a un tempo e alzandosi* Il posto di un'amante? Non merito altro, forse: mi chiedo di più (*Act III, sc. 7:111*).

⁶⁰ In the text of *L'illusione*, there is no evidence that Signora Montano is, or ever was, a mother, so it must be assumed that she is not.

Emma cannot be a mother in name only, and so she leaves Alberto and her children. His admittance that they cannot survive without her is the ultimate proof of her maternal power. For, just as all of nature withered and died when Demeter exercised her maternal power not to generate, so too will the family that Alberto and Emma created wither and die. By renouncing her motherhood and invoking her maternal power—or rather, her right to choose—she frees herself from the ties of the patriarchal society in which she has been trapped since birth. Emma does not commit to returning to her mother's home and thus she completely removes herself from the maternal continuum. She will no longer be within sight of the reciprocal gazes of either her mother or her daughter.

H. Emma as Daughter

The relationship between Emma and her mother, Maria, should not be overlooked. Of course, the relationship between Emma and her own daughter is important, but it is only one side of the maternal continuum. Emma's mother is alive and still involved with her daughter on a daily basis. At the end of the play, as discussed above, Emma uses her maternal power to renounce her own motherhood; however, Maria has made no such decision. Emma still belongs in part to the continuum, even if she will no longer reproduce. This is the power bestowed on her as a woman.

The play begins with Emma taking refuge at her mother's house, in her childhood bedroom, and it is only natural that Emma returns there during a time of crisis. She looks for her mother's gaze while she has temporarily lost Lisetta's. Within the patriarchal structure the mother-daughter relationship is of particular importance, because (as previously noted) the mother was responsible for instructing her daughter(s) into the same system. Throughout *L'illusione*, Maria tries to maintain this role with Emma.

In “Female Identity between Sexuality and Maternity,” Silvia Vegetti Finzi discusses the idea of education by mothers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This education differed depending on the gender of the child. Additionally, since it occurred at home, it was also invisible. This invisibility was especially important in the case of the daughter, because it permitted a girl to be manipulated by way of the mother. To that end, a mother was to control her daughter’s erotic nature, as instructed by the doctor. Vegetti Finzi notes that this resulted in a control of female eroticism carried out by the same women who were being controlled. This concept echoes Plato’s use of Diotima’s female voice in order to annihilate female power. By the end of *L’Illusione*, this job will fall to Miss Wedding, as Emma is clearly incapable of doing so because of her extramarital sexual activity. The governess’s invisibility is an interesting choice on the part of Rosselli, given this notion of an unseen *education* of women, by women. Within the confines of this system is the idea that sexuality was punishable with maternity. Vegetti Finzi describes a “second nature” of the female that will appear authentic by way of this invisible education.

In order to guarantee that the ‘second nature’ induced by education conforms to the essence of female nature, the mother must teach her daughter that ‘dependence is the natural state of women’. Docility is her most important dowry since she is subjected to men for her entire life, first to her father, then to her husband. Moreover, once she becomes a mother, she must subject her desires to her child. The mother of a family, far from being a society woman, is confined to her home as a nun to the nunnery. Women’s felicity resides in the government of the home, leaving the government of the external world to man (132-33).

In the first of act of *L’Illusione*, a scene takes place between Maria and Alberto. In the first reading of the dialogue between the two Alberto seems manic, blaming Maria for Emma’s actions. Taking into consideration Vegetti Finzi’s article on the role of the mother in a mother-daughter relationship at this time, Alberto’s reasoning is not altogether wrong.

ALBERTO: Ve ne supplico: andatevene. Se voi aveste una idea di quanto mi faccia

soffrire la vostra presenza...

MARIA: *dolorosamente* Così Dio volesse che il vostro giusto risentimento, che il vostro disprezzo ricadessero su di me soltanto! E pure vi giuro che è un dolore che sorpassa ogni altro dolore umano quello di doversi vergognare della propria figlia...(*china la testa, come sotto un peso*).

ALBERTO: *con violenza* Ah non vi vergognerete mai abbastanza per essere la madre di quella creatura indegna! Ma quali, quali esempi le avete voi dato perché si pervertisse in tal modo? (*Act I, sc.7:29*).

Cavarero would have a difficult time reappropriating the female figure of Maria, because she is perhaps too old and too entrenched in the patriarchal society in which she lives. She, in fact, agrees with Alberto and takes some of the blame for Emma's actions.

The two also discuss the reason that Alberto did not kill Emma or her lover in a crime of passion. According to the Italian Penal Code, Art.587, until August 5, 1981⁶¹ it was morally rationalized (and therefore, considered less of a crime) for a father, husband, brother, or fiancé to kill their daughter, wife, sister, fiancée, or their lover, for committing an act of adultery. This crime of passion was punishable by between three and seven years in prison. Maria understands and explains why Alberto chose not murder Emma.

MARIA: Lo so, io so che le avete volute bene.

ALBERTO: Sono sei giorni, vedete, sei giorni che mi domando perché io non l'abbia uccisa.

MARIA: Perché è la madre delle vostre creature.

⁶¹ <http://www.mondodiritto.it/codici/codice-penale/art-587-codice-penale-omicidio-e-lesione-personale-a-causa-di-onore.html>

ALBERTO: Ah no! No! Perché...*coprendosi con le mani il viso* Oh miseria!

MARIA: Esse vi avrebbero chiesto conto, un giorno dei vostro delitto.

ALBERTO: Mi avrebbero benedetto.

MARIA: Alberto, voi dimenticate che oltre ai doveri verso il vostro orgoglio ne avete, di più gravi verso di loro; e questi doveri non sono di sangue ma di amore (*Act I, sc.7:31-32*).

During this scene, the spectator wants to believe that Alberto can overcome his paranoia about what the rest of society thinks, simply for the love of his children, but it is clear from the third act that he cannot. All hope that Alberto can free himself from the patriarchal shackles that hold him is lost. Emma, however, finds a way (albeit unconventionally) to do so. In the scenes above, Maria works tirelessly to help her daughter return to her *natural* and *normal* place in society, within the structure that has been created to control her and her female nature. This is, of course, Maria's role within the society, which she has willingly accepted.

I. Conclusion

Emma, unlike Maria, does not accept the destiny that Alberto tries to force onto her. Emma's choice to leave Alberto is the greatest accomplishment of *L'illusione*. If on the one hand Rosselli failed to create a stimulating and action-packed drama, she succeeded on the other to create a female figure that not only reflected Amelia's own strong willed nature, but also echoed the fledging feminist movement. One cannot say, however, that the playwright set out (in this case or in any other) to write a play in support of the feminist movement. As she stated in her autobiography and as Pugliese reiterates in his article, "Central to all her work s a belief in the independence of the individual, including women" (60). In *L'illusione* that belief is manifested in the character of Emma, who carries within her the voice of the female playwright.

CHAPTER 3 *EMMA LIONA (LADY HAMILTON)*

A. Introduction

In 1924, Pincherle Rosselli finished writing what would be her last dramatic work. Unlike the author's other theatrical endeavors, this drama was based on a real person and real events that occurred during the protagonist's lifetime. It is an understatement to say that Emma Liona, Emy Lyon, Lady Hamilton, Emma Hart,⁶² or whatever one chooses to call her, would become Rosselli's most compelling character. Most critics consider *Anima* to be her masterpiece, but I would argue that it is actually *Emma Liona*. As discussed in the introduction, Italian women in literature and especially in the theatre at this time were often overlooked, and similarly their works were swept aside in favor of those of their male counterparts.⁶³ However, it is clear that Amelia Rosselli and a relatively few others did enjoy a particular respect in the literary, and in this case, the theatrical world—but only to a point. It is perhaps strange then, that *Emma Liona*

⁶² According to the 2007 biography, *Beloved Emma*, Lady Hamilton was known by several different names, in both private and public life. There were probably many reasons for these discrepancies, most likely stemming from the need to have a more "appropriate" name in society (as suggested in a letter from her benefactor, Charles Gréville) than that which she was given at birth, Emy Lyon. Her name change from Emma Lyon to Lady Hamilton will become a pivotal moment in Rosselli's drama.

⁶³ In the introduction to Kelly's anthology, she points out several ideas important to her volume and to the topic of missing women writers from the history of literature. "A search of twenty-nine anthologies, collections, and critical histories of 'modern drama' published in both England and the United States between 1880 and 1940, for example, reveals only four women playwrights listed in more than one source. Why would these dramatists, so prolific and celebrated during the Restoration and eighteenth century, and writing in ever greater numbers, in the nineteenth century, disappear at this 'crucial time' of awakening?"(1-2) "How could the work of 4,700 women writing in the U.S. and England – to cite two national examples – be mislaid? As we shall see, it took a sustained effort on the part of critics, historians, and producers to create the ghost effect" (2). Kelly comments that critics and anthologies alike at the time, "pointedly ignored women dramatists, remaining silent about all but three or four" (2-3). "In the anxious masculine arena of world drama preoccupied with representing modernity in the figure of a woman in crisis, plays by women were pointedly overlooked" (3).

was never produced during Amelia's lifetime, as she was well respected in the literary community and beyond. In fact, it was staged for the first time only in 2007.⁶⁴ Unfortunately, neither Rosselli, nor her biographer, nor any other research on the subject suggest a reason for the lack of production between 1924 and 2007. A careful reading of the play, though, does suggest a reason, one that transcends the discussion of the female figure in Rosselli's works and speaks to the basic human need to protect oneself and one's family. To the author's credit, *Emma Liona* was not just the tale of one woman's life; it was also an incredibly honest discussion of the political climate in Italy at the time of its writing. This fact may account for its lack of staging before the twenty-first century.

Rosselli's last dramatic work is a thematically-rich and inherently complex play. Gone are the simple, domestic sets of her previous plays and the short, realistic timelines as advised and championed by Aristotle.⁶⁵ The events of this play span almost thirty years and jump between England, Italy, and finally, France. In between, the character of Emma Liona encounters a vast number of people, while aging from a barely 20-year-old girl to a middle-aged woman who is physically ill, mentally unstable, and facing her own mortality. This drama is, in short, an epic. It is a great departure for Rosselli from her other works, which usually dealt with domestic dramas and never blurred the lines between real life, politics, and drama. Here, dual themes of politics and domesticity run parallel to each other.

Moreover, in her previous plays, no woman (nor man for that matter) ever held the name of a title character. The names of each of her other works, *Anima*, *L'Illusione*, *L'Idea Fissa*,

⁶⁴ All sources, including the circolorosselli official website, list the 2007 production as the first ever: *Prima rappresentazione assoluta del dramma teatrale*. circolorosselli.it/svolti-2007.htm (5 March 2015).

⁶⁵ See 46 on Aristotle's unities.

L'Amica, *El Refolo*, *El Socio del Papà*, and *San Marco* are general in their meaning and do not appear to place any one character at the center of the drama. It was only once inside the theatre that it would become clear to the audience that *Anima* and *Illusione*, as well as her shorter one-act plays, were substantially plays about women. No single title speaks directly to a female protagonist, for even *L'Amica* is a word based on one's relationship to someone else. With *Emma Liona*, both in title and in the context of the play, Rosselli commits to a woman as the central figure of the work: it becomes an undeniable fact. Of this work, Pugliese notes that "Although cast in a negative light, it is clearly Lady Hamilton who is the protagonist of history in Rosselli's play and not Admiral Nelson" (6). It is unfortunate then that so much time passed between the publication of *Emma Liona* and its first production. Furthermore, it was never seen and most likely not read by her contemporary critics, which may be why *Anima* is proclaimed as her greatest work. While the choice of Emma Liona Hamilton as a protagonist may be a unique one for Rosselli, it is not an altogether surprising topic at this time. In 1815, an anonymous biography was published about the infamous wife of England's ambassador to Italy leading up to the French Revolution. Additionally, during Rosselli's lifetime, several articles, plays, and other writings were published about this fascinating woman.⁶⁶ Surely, a well-read writer such as Amelia Rosselli would have been aware of Lady Hamilton's existence even in the early twentieth century.

⁶⁶ In Amato's chapter on Rosselli's theatrical works, she offers an overview of the various texts and previous dramas, as well as operettas, on the subject of Emma Liona, popular or well-known during the playwright's lifetime (74-75).

Emma Lyon was born in Wales in 1765, though the exact date is unknown.⁶⁷ She was born into near poverty and, through ill-fated events (including the loss of her father when she was a baby); she ended up living a promiscuous life, passing from man to man until the very end. She died destitute but still carrying the title of Lady, which came with a price. Choosing this type of protagonist for her last theatrical work was a brilliant choice on the part of Rosselli. Essentially, Amelia put an already compromised female figure in the leading role and succeeded in turning her into a great woman.

B. Summary

As mentioned above, this particular play of Rosselli's is the most complex and complicated of all that she had written. With an accurate hand, she traces the life of one of England's most notorious women. The play is divided into four episodes, and almost all characters are based on real people or amalgams of them. As the drama begins, Emma Liona is almost twenty-years-old and living in a home secured for her by Charles Gréville, located in England. Gréville, who rescued Emma from a desperate situation and sees himself as her protector, (along with Emma's mother, Mrs. Cadogan) also resides in the home.⁶⁸ Emma is regularly attended by the painter, George Romney and several of Gréville's male friends. Many times during the course of the play, Emma is the only woman in a room full of men. In the first

⁶⁷ There is no official record of Emy Lyon's birthdate. Researchers assume her birth occurred in the same year as her baptism, thus 1765. Emma reportedly celebrated her birthday on April 26, whether or not that was the date of her actual birth. *Beloved Emma*, Location 24.

⁶⁸ In her biography on Lady Hamilton, Fraser tells us that the house was actually one in which Gréville kept Emma. He stayed there on occasion and did not actually live there until his own financial situation demanded it (Loc. 410). For Rosselli's purpose, it was more convenient to represent the house on Edgware Row as his home as well, thus allowing Emma to play the role of Gréville's wife, a fact that is discussed by Gréville's brother in first episode of the play. He implies, quite coldly that Emma is not a "real" wife and therefore is not deserving of the same respect and treatment that would be given to a genuine spouse (Ep 1, sc.8:40).

act, the audience quickly learns that Emma had a child out of wedlock and that the child is now living with Emma's grandmother, as per Gréville's instructions. Emma appears to be a person who will do whatever Gréville wishes, as she lives to make him happy.⁶⁹ Sad as this situation may seem, especially in light of a discussion on the female figure, Rosselli does not allow Emma to appear pathetic. She, instead, creates within this restrained and confined life a female character that is strong and resourceful even in the worst of situations. At the end of the act, Gréville discusses sending Emma to live with his recently widowed uncle, Sir William. The idea is concocted by Gréville's brother, Robert, who fears that Charles's association with Emma will ruin his reputation in England and make it impossible for him to marry. Gréville must marry well because of his poor economic state, brought about by bad financial decisions. At the end of the episode Robert and Gréville discuss and plan for Emma's future, as if she is were property and not a human being.

As the second episode begins, four years after the first, Emma is in Napoli anxiously awaiting news from her beloved Gréville, with whom she has not had contact in almost a year. However, she is now a well-respected socialite in Naples with no evidence of her former, promiscuous life to be seen. According to her mother, she should be grateful for and basking in her new life, which is all thanks to Sir William. He has taken Emma in, given her all that she could ever want, and showered her with affection along with declarations of love. Emma, however, is perpetually ill humored and longs only for Gréville. At the request of her mother, Romney comes for a visit and it is through him that she learns of the Gréville brothers' true plan

⁶⁹ This idea is backed up by biographies about Lady Hamilton, in which she is said to have lived only for Gréville's happiness. Fraser cites several letters in which Emma (as Emy Hart) writes to Gréville promising that she will do whatever he wants in order to procure his happiness, including give up her child. *Beloved Emma* (Loc. 892-1031).

for Emma. She was sent by them to “distract” Lord William and keep him from marrying, in order to make certain that his large inheritance would be left to his favorite nephew, Gréville, upon his death. In addition, Charles would be free to marry a woman of good social standing with a large dowry—so long as Emma was out of the way. While in Napoli, Emma tricks Romney into divulging the truth. The confirmation of Emma’s fears marks a turning point in her behavior and, by end of the second episode, she declares Emma Liona dead.

Emma has legally become Mrs. Hamilton by the beginning of the third episode, and it is during this segment that her true nature is fully revealed. Whereas the first two episodes showed Emma being manipulated and maneuvered by the men in her life, the third reveals a woman in power, of her own making. Now a close friend of Queen Maria Carolina, she uses this position in order to advance her own personal goals. She is the ambassador’s wife and, as stated early on, she performs her duties with exceptional skill. At the beginning of this episode, Emma is visited by three townspeople who have come to her for help. While waiting for an audience with Lady Hamilton, the two men discuss the people’s true feelings for this once-beloved woman. Most are unhappy with her political intervention, as well as her seedy past, which is no longer a secret. Upon her entrance, the woman in attendance begs her to ask the Queen to revoke the death penalty against her son, her only child; but Emma refuses to help her. In the scene that follows, Emma accuses her own doctor of being a Jacobin and warns him that his life is her hands. Finally, after a discussion with Lord Hamilton in which he tells her that he wants to retire and move away from Naples, Emma meets Sir Horatio Nelson. This encounter irrevocably changes the course of history. In each other, Emma and Horatio have found a partner with the same aspirations and goals. This episode ends with the knowledge that the affair between these two will be one of dangerous proportions.

The final episode takes place in an inn at Calais, many years later. Rosselli cleverly uses the rest of the characters to tell the story of Nelson's downfall at the hand of Emma. The discussion between the guests is often heated and political. Unbeknownst to them, Emma is onstage the whole time and learns (along with the audience) how the rest of the world sees her. This last discussion of politics, the third in the play, is in some ways a memorial to those Jacobins who died seemingly for no reason at the hand of Emma and the Queen, with the help of Sir Nelson. Gréville reappears at the inn and, once again, tries to rescue her from eventual financial, and more likely than not, physical ruin. Emma, who at this point is weak, frail, old, and poor, still tries to hold her head high while confronting him. After ascending to the top she cannot go backwards and revert to the kept woman she once was. The play ends with Emma collapsing on the floor, overcome with the guilt of the past.

C. Time, Memory, and History

In the traditional play analysis taken up before a show is produced, all those involved creatively, from designers and the director to the actors and the theatre's artistic manager, will consider the element of time. At this point, three questions are generally asked: Why was the work written when it was written? What is the importance of the period in which the play is set? Finally, why is it important to produce this work now? This last question is arguably one of the most important, though in the case of *Emma Liona*, the most difficult to answer since the play has rarely been staged.

As Pritner and Waters point out in *Introduction to Play Analysis*, the idea or concept of *time* in a theatrical work is never simple, and one "must be careful to create an analysis that reflects today's culture and world view rather than an analysis that reflects another culture and time. You are reading and analyzing the play for your audience in its time and place. Historical

perspectives on the play, previous productions, even the playwright's ideas reflect another time, another place, and another audience” (74). The analysis of time within a dramatic work cannot be based solely on its temporal setting, even if, as in the case of *Emma Liona*, it is set in a real time and place and based on true characters and historical events. The accuracy of an overall analysis is dependent on the element of time, both within the play itself as well as during its writing and its eventual production.⁷⁰ It is precisely this idea of an analysis that “reflects today's culture and world view,” which allows for the use of Cavarero’s theory in this discussion.

The aforementioned questions about time are relevant to the conversation about Rosselli’s works and the female figures within them. When trying to answer these queries there are many factors to consider, not the least of which being the European political climate at the time that Rosselli wrote *Emma Liona (Lady Hamilton)*. Two important factors of time must be taken into consideration. First, with a publication date of 1924,⁷¹ Rosselli, an anti-fascist as well as a self-proclaimed human rights activist, would have been writing (or at the very least finishing) this play in a pre-Fascist Italy. By all accounts, including her own, she was politically

⁷⁰ Throughout Pritner and Waters text, the concept of time is frequently addressed. The idea of time recurs in every chapter in relation to some of the most important plays in the history of theatre including works by Shakespeare and Tennessee Williams. Perhaps, this element is stressed repeatedly because of the unique relationship that exists between the spectator and the performance, called the *theatrical contract* (34). The live performance of a literary work is unique from one that is read alone by the solitary reader. Time, here, plays a pivotal role in setting the scene, recalling the past, and helping the spectator to immerse herself in the drama, thus creating a *willing suspension of disbelief*.

⁷¹ A publication date of 1924 is listed in all sources consulted. However, there are several discrepancies regarding when the play was actually written or finished. Advertisements in *La Nazione – Firenze* for the 2007 production list 1914 as the date of completion. In Giovanna Amato’s essay “Teatro italiano, coscienza europea” for the Quaderni del Circolo Rosselli, she states that “È con Emma Liona, terminato nel 1923, che Amelia raggiunge la sintesi della sua poetica” (71). The drama was an ongoing project for many years. Amato does note that there was a first draft in 1914 (74). In the *Epistolare familiare*, Carlo sends a letter to Amelia in 1923, regarding the character of Sir Nelson and asking her to modify her portrayal based on letters he found in England (161). Still, even given the discrepancies, the firm placement within the early fascist movement in Italy cannot be denied.

astute and very much aware of what was happening around her. In her own memoirs, she writes the following about the first *dopoguerra* in Italy:

Del resto il fascismo incominciava ad affermarsi. Erano di quel tempo le prime spedizioni punitive, tacitamente sopportate dagli ambienti ufficiali, che o non osavano intervenire o piuttosto credevano, s'illudevano che fossero un aiuto prezioso per ristabilire l'ordine in Italia, turbato dalla recente ondata di scontento popolare ben comprensibile dopo le delusioni subite. Inevitabile conseguenza di ogni guerra: poiché la guerra, anche per chi vince, non è mai né mai sarà la riparatrice delle ingiustizie patite, bensì la creatrice di nuove (166-67).

In reality, *Emma Liona (Lady Hamilton)* could be considered a political drama enveloped within a domestic one, making Rosselli's choice of subject matter perfectly suited to the moment in which she lived. The real Lady Hamilton lived during an equally tumultuous time in Europe. With Spanish rule in the south, along with the eventual French Revolution in the north, the continent was as politically unstable then as it would become during the rise of Fascism. As noted above, Rosselli is fully conscious of the situation around her and it cannot be mere coincidence that she chooses a female subject who lived in a period similar to her own. Rosselli's own political activity was often veiled in other social undertakings, not the least of which was raising her sons to be champions of their own causes. In her *Memorie* the dramatist dedicates a significant portion of the text to discussing her goals, both personally and morally, for all three of her children. Stanislao Pugliese also notes the following in his article about Rosselli: "Family letters reveal a continuous dialogue concerning politics, culture and society. They also demonstrate that the Rosselli brothers developed a strong social conscience at an early age" (3). He goes on to add, "her ideas would create an active interest in social problems and a

sense of duty, obligation, and responsibility in all three sons.⁷² The ideals that she passed on to them were imperative of moral freedom; [...]” (Pugliese 3-4).

It was, however, due to this insistence on standing up for one’s beliefs that she and her family would pay dearly. They suffered the ransacking of their home on more than one occasion, constant surveillance by the Regime, repeated imprisonment, and exile of sons, Carlo and Nello, followed by their assassinations in 1937, and then Amelia’s self-exile in America with the remaining members of her family. Despite the great losses that she suffered, Rosselli continued to write and express her own views while exiled in New York and even after her return to Italy following the end of World War II, in articles and letters (Calloni 258).

The writing of *Emma Liona* was timely for political reasons, but also in relationship to the burgeoning feminist movement in both the United States and Europe. The time in which this play is set is both important and intentional, and the many threads that Rosselli weaves together are impressive for a play at this time.⁷³ As noted before, this is a complicated work in which those ideas which were just hinted at in *Anima* and *Illusione* now become the major themes of *Emma Liona*, again for reasons of time. Unlike her previous theatrical works, the historical setting of this play places distance between the author and her subject matter, allowing her to enter the political discussion (both past and current) through the action of the drama. Perhaps, had it been produced, the play would have been a way to disseminate Amelia’s own thought to a

⁷² In *Memorie*, Amelia recounts a story in which her oldest son, Aldo, inspired by this sense of duty convinces his mother to hang the Italian flag at a time when it was politically dangerous to do so. He and his two younger brothers hang it outside the house, more in an act of pride, than one of defiance (140-142). Later, it is Aldo, again spurred by this sense of duty and obligation, who goes to fight and later dies in the First World War. It was his choice, or rather his heart’s desire to enlist and fight for Italy (140).

⁷³ This is by no means a negative comment on women in general or Amelia specifically. However, given the circumstances already noted in the introduction, the idea that any woman in Italy, at this time, could have great success in the theatre, let alone with a female protagonist in a political contest, is noteworthy.

wider public rather than to just her sons in the privacy of their home. As well, it may have been this very notion of disseminating political beliefs that kept *Emma Liona* off the stage during Rosselli's lifetime.

Political plays by women at this time were not common. As mentioned in the introduction to this work, a strong presence of female playwrights was, and in many ways, still is lacking in Italian theatre. As Bellana and D'Angeli note in a recent article entitled, *La "Mancanza" delle Drammaturghe Italiane*, "La scrittura per il teatro non è territorio molto praticato dalle donne, in Italia [...] (8). The authors go on to discuss the fact that this *mancanza* is not only historical, but also a fact of modern Italian theatre. Furthermore, they mention two trends that Rosselli defies in her works. First, they propose the idea of a plurivocalità in which women in the theatre co-write plays; the reasons for this, though, are far from positive:

La plurivocalità potrebbe essere determinate nel fatto che il prodotto teatrale è, anche nell'aspetto drammaturgico, un manufatto artigianale, bisognoso di competenze diversificate. Si può ipotizzare un bisogno di coalizione che nasce dell'atavica insicurezza femminile nei territori della cultura e dell'arte, a lungo suo sofferto interdetto; in tal caso non sorprende che il timore aumenti in un campo che obbliga a stretti rapporti col mercato, a contrattazioni di tipo economico, a valutazioni finanziarie; che richiede insomma capacità imprenditoriali... Perfino Franca Rame, attrice di fama nonché abilissima impresaria e amministratrice, confessa la paura a cimentarsi con la scrittura, [...] (8).

In this sense, Rosselli, who always wrote alone, must be considered (along with Annie Vivanti, Teresa Gray-Ubertis, and a few others) a pioneer of her time.⁷⁴ Pincherle Rosselli's era was not only one of political strife but also one of immense opportunity for the women who could (or rather, who were not afraid to), as in the words of Franca Rame, *cimentarsi con la scrittura*, however difficult that may have been.

⁷⁴ See note 25.

Bellana and D'Angeli touch on another idea with reference to contemporary Italian theatre, but with roots in the patriarchal norms of the past. The authors discuss the idea of women rewriting the past through memory, from dramas to narratives to letters to articles, noting that “Per le donne la memoria è un punto fermo” (8). Though they do not mention how memory would be treated differently by a male author, the authors confirm the idea that, of these types of writings, they were “tutti appartenenti a tempi e culture assai diversi.” It is exactly this idea that must be considered in relationship to Rosselli or any playwright’s work. Not only is the plot of a work situated in a particular time, belonging historically to that era, but also belonging to the cultural and societal tenets of the period in which it was produced. Unfortunately, the article’s authors also contend that, “L’intento è l’attualizzazione psicologica più che la rilettura storica con finalità politiche – [...]” (8). They are lamenting a lack of a political objective in contemporary Italian woman’s dramaturgy that is by no means true of Rosselli’s work in *Emma Liona*. Again, Amelia proves herself to be ahead of her time. Perhaps her ability to write a political play hidden in the context of an historical drama is just a testament to her talent as an author or perhaps, instead, it speaks to a greater, more troubling issue with the history of women’s theatre in Italy. It is quite possible, given the current political climate and the fact that the play was never produced, that not many critics or historians were even aware of existence of this play. Whatever the reason, the play boasts a female protagonist who surpasses the others conceived of by Rosselli. In Emma’s words and actions are reflected not only the female voice, but that of the whole women’s movement, whether or not her creator would ever admit to that.

Rosselli lends credence to this idea of a feminist work by engaging all the characters in political debate, including Emma. To that end, we also learn that one of the activists, who dies later on, is also a woman: Eleonora Pimentel (*Emma Liona* 177). Through Emma’s politics and

references to Queen Maria Carolina and Eleonora, Rosselli strengthens the image of the female figure within the play. In the initial political discussion, Emma plays only an observatory role. By the end of the play, she not only contributes to the discussion but also controls it. The first mention of politics begins with Lord Hamilton stating that Europeans now find themselves in difficult times. He, along with his companions Lord Gloucester and Prince Dietrichstein, discuss the situation at hand and a possible French revolution. It is important to remember that this dialogue occurs *after* Emma has learned the truth about Gréville and the real reasons for which he sent her to Napoli. Her transformation from Emma Liona to Lady Hamilton is beginning. The conversation below follows a discussion of man's mortality:

DIETRICHSTEIN: *Misteriosamente* nell'Arsenale si stanno facendo grandi preparativi per esser pronti, nel caso, a una guerra contro la Francia. E se poi fosse vero quello che si va sussurrando... di una prossima alleanza della Corte di Napoli con l'Inghilterra... vedrete dove va a finire la vostra fatalità!

A Hamilton: Che ne dite, Milord? Voi dovete saperne qualcosa?

LORD HAMILTON: *sorridendo, per sviare il discorso.* Scusate, Principe, ma vi pare il momento di occuparci di tali... inezie, invece di fare il nostro dovere con Madamigella?

DIETRICHSTEIN: *avvicinandosi a Emma.* Vi chiedo umilmente perdono.

LORD GLOCESTER: Avete ragione: bando alla politica! (*Ep. 2, sc. 6:93*).

The implication of this brief exchange is obvious: the men should not discuss such things in front of a woman. However, Emma's reaction, perhaps stemming from her revelations about Gréville, is atypical of the time and one that would be expected from a more modern female protagonist.

EMMA: *che nel frattempo sarà stata occupata intorno al tavolo da tè scambiando poche parole con Romney, ascoltando attentamente la conversazione dei tre gentiluomini*

Perché? M'interessa molto, la politica. E mi piace quel che dite di Sua Maestà la Regina⁷⁵ Dev'essere magnifico lottare così, sordamente, contro una marea che s'innalza da ogni parte! Tenere stretta in pugno *tendendo il braccio col pugno chiuso*. la sorte degli uomini! (*Ep.2, sc.6:93*).

In this brief paragraph, Rosselli tells the audience almost everything they need to know about Emma's change in personality. She is a woman, usually found in the company of men, who sees in the queen a strong female role model and ally to be admired. In her last sentence, which is immediately disregarded by Lord Hamilton, Emma's objective is clear: she will hold the fate of men in her hand. A seemingly impossible and innocent threat from a woman born into a lower class, known as a kept woman and entertainer, and who at this moment in time has no title, assets, dowry, or name. Here, Rosselli presents a female figure who will transcend the societal norms of the era.

Emy Lyon, who would become the protagonist of Amelia's last drama, was born at a very important moment in the context of women's history. Lady Hamilton's birth is generally accepted as having occurred in 1765, thus making her a contemporary of Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) and Olympe de Gouges (1748-1793), both of whom would go on to write about and promote the rights of women—anticipating the first wave of the feminist movement. Again, it seems no coincidence that Pincherle Rosselli would have chosen a popular female figure from

⁷⁵ This is a reference to Queen Maria Carolina, a younger sister of Marie Antoinette.

this moment in time. It is during Lady Hamilton's lifetime that two important sociopolitical movements intersect: the publication in 1792 of Wollstonecraft's treatise, the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, which would help launch the women's movement;⁷⁶ and the French Revolution (1789-1799), which promoted the concepts of liberty, equality, and brotherhood. These ideas often echo through the works, both theatrical and political, of Rosselli and her sons.

It seems an almost-too-perfect historical moment for a proponent of human rights, such as Rosselli, to pass up. In her own memoirs, she is quick to point out the care she took in raising her sons to be champions for all people and that her own beliefs were always based on concern for all other human beings, not one particular group or another. She also counters any claims of feminism with this idea that she was concerned for all. However, Rosselli's social projects often served the specific needs of women and children, from the Lyceum di Firenze (1914) to the Casina di Aldo (1916).⁷⁷

Amelia wrote her memoirs at three different points in her life, over the space of decades. Her earliest entries refute this idea of being either a feminist or a socialist: she was concerned only with the injustices found among the division of social classes. In response to being aligned with the socialist movement by the newspaper *l'Avanti*, Rosselli had this to say:

⁷⁶ Wollstonecraft was by no means the first woman to have written on the subject of women's rights, however, her treatise is very important to the movement not only for its content, but also for the fact that she was a role model of her ideas and lived her life as she suggested in her essay. As Franco Restaino notes, she gave "alla figura e all'opera di Wollstonecraft il merito indiscutibile di essere la prima testimonianza, di vita e di pensiero, nella lotta delle donne nell'epoca contemporanea per la conquista sul piano teorico e per la realizzazione sul piano pratico di quei diritti che venivano allora – e spesso sono tuttora – predicati come universali ma riconosciuti in concreto soltanto come diritti di maschi" (Cavarero and Restaino 5-6).

⁷⁷ For more information on these organizations, see the chapter entitled Firenze in her *Memorie*. As well, the Lyceum Club is still active today in Florence: <http://www.lyceumclubfirenze.net/>. In 2015, an interesting article appeared in Florence's English Language newspaper, The Florentine, about the anniversary of The Lyceum Club, noting Rosselli's early participation. The article is accessible here: <http://www.theflorentine.net/lifestyle/2015/03/the-lyceum/>.

[...], mi proclamò senz'altro socialista e come appartenente ai loro. Non lo ero, se non per un sentimento di maggiore comprensione e simpatia per le classi più povere di quelle che avessero le donne della cosiddetta *buona società*.

Avevo, per esempio, sempre trovato assai ingiusto che le persone di servizio non fossero, come tali, affatto protette dalle legge, perché non appartenenti alla categoria di operai veri e propri. La padrona aveva il diritto di licenziare, anche sui due piedi, una persona di servizio. Questo mi pareva supremamente in giusto, anzi addirittura iniquo (*Memorie* 117).

In *Women and Men in Love: European Identities in the Twentieth Century*, author Luisa

Passerini notes that “The polemic against feminism was also taken up by other women of great talents such as Amelia Pincherle Rosselli who was also a member of the intellectual and Jewish bourgeoisie” (67). Calloni also notes several examples of Amelia’s disagreement with the way that feminists comported themselves. Giovanna Amato sums up Rosselli’s sentiments, at the time, this way:

La coscienza femminile va ‘educata’: Amelia, né suffragetta né femminista ma borghese e mazziniana, sente come obbligo quello di una solidarietà tra classi sociali che permetta alla donna di esprimersi attraverso l’educazione e il lavoro. Il suo obbiettivo non è la parità sessuale, ma la possibilità per la donna, di agire all’interno della società con l’esercizio dei propri doveri e la riscossione dei propri diritti. Da qui il suo impegno nelle varie cooperative (100-101).

Rosselli’s objection to feminism at the time actually seems to set her squarely aligned with the argument that has plagued the movement since its inception and has divided it into different paths, that of equality versus difference (Pateman 18).

In 1945, while exiled in America, Amelia wrote an essay for *Uguaglianza!* entitled, “Strade vecchie e strade nuove.” Throughout this essay, she seems to question her own actions and wonders if she could have done more to specifically address the *female question*.

Furthermore, she goes on to encourage Italian women to stand together in order to eliminate the perpetual *questione femminile*:

Esiste dunque ancora – 1945 – un problema femminile, e, c’è dunque ancora, a quarant’anni di distanza, una emancipazione femminile da conquistare? I nostri uomini,

anche i più illuminati, da quest'orecchio non hanno mai voluto sentirci. [...] Si è sempre riso molto, in Italia, di ogni manifestazione o tentativo di manifestazione femminile collettiva. [...] Figurarsi – dicevano – la massa femminile ignorante sarà facile preda del primo partito che l'adesca [...]. Forse il nostro torto, o il nostro errore fu di limitare la lotta a una cerchia ristretta: fu di aver paura di sfidare l'opinione pubblica e il ridicolo; fu, infine, di non organizzare la massa, serbando al movimento un carattere troppo intellettuale. [...] Ma invece, finché non sono le masse a lottare per la conquista della libertà essenziali, non si può sperare di conquistarle. [...]

.....
Giovandosi [del diritto di voto], le donne americane hanno potuto occupare posti politici importanti e influire efficacemente perché fossero emanate leggi in favore della massa femminile lavoratrice. [...]

.....
Tornando a noi: creare, promuovere l'organizzazione di tutte le donne che lavorano mi pare sia il compito di quante, in Italia, studiano l'enorme, faticoso problema dell'emancipazione femminile: ché lo studio teorico a nulla servirebbe se non fosse seguito dalla pratica immediata (3-4).

Of course, at this point Amelia was nearing the end of her life and was now an elderly woman, who at the beginning of the essay emphasizes having had a “lunga vita (troppo lunga...)” (3-4). Her distance from Italy (and Fascism in particular,) as well as the end of World War II, may have allowed her the freedom to write more honestly instead of behind the veil of a character in a play.

However, as a younger woman and mother of three politically active men⁷⁸ who was clearly aware of both the first wave of feminism and the ever-darkening political climate, perhaps writing a play that addressed both issues during rise of Fascism may have been possible only under the guise of historical fiction. Rosselli wisely chose a figure in a time similar to her own in which she could *freely* discuss the current political climate. This is just another example of how time itself played a factor in the author's own beliefs. In fact Calloni notes that, while in

⁷⁸ At the time that Amelia began writing *Emma Liona* (around 1914); all three of her sons were alive. Aldo was killed in battle in 1916. Amelia's discussion of Aldo's decision to enlist in May 1915 and his subsequent death in 1916, is quite compelling and speaks to the inherent patriotism of the family. See *Memorie*, p. 140-156.

New York, Amelia “acquista un’idea più ampia di patria e di democrazia, si rende conto delle nuove problematiche sociali, individua quali saranno i nodi della futura democrazia italiana” (*Memorie* 261). The passage of time allowed Amelia to reexamine her own perspectives on and contributions to the women’s movement.

The fact remains, however, that the drama was not produced until 2007, thus obscuring this work from the public for several decades. The answer as to why *Emma Liona* was produced in that year is much easier to come by, rather than trying to hypothesize as to why it was not produced before. *Emma Liona (Lady Hamilton)* was first produced in Florence, as part of a celebration called “Firenze e il Novecento.” According to a brief article announcing the presentation in *La Nazione*, it was a joint effort between Amelia’s cherished Lyceum Club and the Circolo Fratelli Rosselli, two organizations that continue to promote the work and ideas of the Rosselli family today. Valdo Spini, president of the Fondazione Circolo Rosselli, stated in reference to the 2007 production that Amelia “rappresenta una figura che rende onore ad una famiglia che ha scritto una pagina elevatissima della storia politica e culturale italiana” (Bartoletti xvi). At least by the early twenty-first century Rosselli had begun to garner the recognition she deserves.

D. Mythological and Literary References

As noted before, Rosselli’s portrayal of Emma Liona’s life is very faithful to the actual events that occurred, though she does take some liberties with the characters themselves and the way in which those events transpired. Much of what occurs in this play is corroborated by the 1815 anonymous biography *Lady Hamilton*, and the 2007 profile by Flora Fraser, *Beloved Emma*. Rosselli’s portrait of the English ambassador’s wife is somewhat more tasteful and respectable, in contrast to the reality. For example, the playwright does not mention that Emma

was a one-time prostitute (142), but she does well to allude to that fact.⁷⁹ Pincherle Rosselli also makes use of several allusions to mythological and fictional characters throughout the drama.

Assuming that nothing an author writes is without intent, those allusions made by Rosselli are often two-fold, expressing elements of Emma's personality but also functioning as metaphors or foreshadowing. In addition, some of these allusions recall actual portraits of the real Emma painted by George Romney: the author carefully interweaves references to his works into the plot. The protagonist is likened to many different iconic figures, who demonstrate a strong female character. She is also referred to by several different names, both good and bad, such as Ariadne, George's muse, the incarnation of all seven muses, an angel, and a *mala femminina* who sucks the lifeblood out of Sir Nelson (*Emma Liona* 176). However, there are two images in particular that should be addressed separately, those of Salomé and a Siren. These last two examples will be discussed in the following pages.

D.1 Emma as Salomé

In the second episode of *Emma Liona* the protagonist, while at Lord William Hamilton's home in Napoli, is visited by George Romney. Rosselli portrays Romney as a somewhat weak-willed and shy man who would do anything for Emma, his muse. During his visit, a paranoid Emma uses his position as her confidant to convince him to divulge the truth about Gréville and why he sent her away:

⁷⁹ Two excellent examples in the first episode. 1- Robert's discussion of what defines a wife and how Emma cannot be classified as such. Robert says, "Prego, si parlava della donna come moglie. Non è il caso per Emma Liona" (*Emma Liona* 40). See also note 67. 2 – The last discussion between Robert and Charles before the group returns for the walk in the woods. Another example in episode three, the discussion between the three gentiluomini, found in this paper on page 136.

EMMA: *fingendo*. Parlate pure liberamente. Non mi dite niente che io non sappia.

Eravamo d'accordo: e se proprio volete saperlo, una delle ragioni che mi hanno spinta a precipitare la mia partenza, l'anno passato, è stato appunto quella di deciderlo più presto a questo matrimonio, per lui tanto necessario. Ma siccome eravamo rimasti intesi che per qualche tempo, per riguardi facili a comprendersi, egli avrebbe taciuto anche con gli amici di questo progetto, così esitavo a parlarvene.

ROMNEY: *rassicurato*. Non credevo che foste informata così di tutto. Me ne compiaccio. Sì, perché la parte di abbandonata non vi si addice. Del resto Gréville dal canto suo non signora la passione che nutre per voi Lord Hamilton, e anzi, parlandone un giorno con me, mi fece capire che sarebbe contento...molto contento se voi...Insomma, se non vi opponeste più oltre a un sentimento che potrebbe essere per voi fonte di molto bene...È un buon ragazzo Gréville, e teme che per un riguardo verso di lui, voi...Mi capite.

Vedendo Emma improvvisamente impallidire e barcolare.

Emma, che avete?

EMMA: *avventandosi su Romney*. Vi ha detto così? Romney, giurate che dite la verità!

Perché se per caso mentiste, vi ucciderei! (*Sc.5:78-79*).

Upon learning the truth, Emma begins her transformation into Lady Hamilton. The following scene is of particular interest, as it turns the drama in a different direction. Although she does not say so outright, it becomes clear through Rosselli's stage directions and Emma's

behavior that our protagonist is now plotting her revenge against Gréville: a revenge that will change not only the course of her own life, but also the course of Italian history.⁸⁰

Emma chooses as her call to her arms, as her declaration of war upon Gréville, a dance. The future Lady Hamilton performs a seductive dance that entrances all the men in the room, with the exception of Romney, who is the only one aware of what is really happening. Although Emma has already won the affections of Lord William, who is desperate to marry her, she now seeks to control him in order to fulfill her own objectives. The enchantress dances for, and to Romney, as if assigning culpability to him for the events concerning Gréville. Therefore, Emma's dance serves two purposes – to seal the deal with Hamilton and to point a finger at Romney for his collusion with Gréville. The stage directions in this scene are more important than the actual dialogue, as Emma's actions and her audience's reactions are detailed by Rosselli:

EMMA: Prende sul divano un lunghissima sciarpa di velo, se ne avvolge tutta, e va al balcone. (Ep.2, sc. 6:96).

Later, as she dances, under the moon:

I quattro uomini la contemplano estatici. Negli occhi di Romney si accende il lampo dell'arte: in quelli degli altri, una sensualità piena di cupidigia. A poco a poco muore la danza; che si trasmuta quasi insensibilmente nel passo lento con cui

⁸⁰ For the most part the events Rosselli recounts in this drama are historically accurate. See *Beloved Emma* for more information on dates and locations. Rosselli changes the character portrayals, as well as the central figure, using Emma's actions as the catalyst for those events, when that was not the reality, as noted by Pugliese's comment in the introduction of this paper. As well, in the *Epistolare Familiare*, Carlo Rosselli writes a letter to his mother requesting her to reconsider her portrayal of Sir Nelson after he found historically accurate material about the military hero in England (177). Several letters were exchanged between Carlo and his mother regarding the structure, plot, and ever-changing script of *Emma Liona (Lady Hamilton)*.

Emma va verso il divano, abbandonandovisi. Un mormorio di ammirazione si alza intorno a lei. Solo Romney tace, quasi cupo.

EMMA: *a Romney.* Dunque vi è piaciuta la mia danza? L'ho inventata io.

ROMNEY: *rozzamente* Non siete una donna, voi; ma un camaleonte.

EMMA: *ridendo pazzamente* Ecco un complimento degno di voi (*Ep.2, sc.6:97*).

There are two clear insinuations in Emma's dance. The first is an obvious reference to the real Emma Lyon's presentations of her *Attitudes*, which she is said to have performed at the ambassador's residence before the two were married. Due to their somewhat erotic nature, they were considered inappropriate to present to the public by an unmarried woman (Fraser 2335). Once she became Lady Hamilton though, she was able to perform them in public as suggested by the following dialogue, in which Emma hints at this possibility.

EMMA: *Un servo entra recando due candelabri accesi.* Ah bene! Dunque credete che incontrerei il favore del pubblico, se mi producessi?

LORD HAMILTON: Un impresario le ha offerto due mila lire per sera per cantare al San Carlo.⁸¹

LORD GLOCESTER: *alzandosi* Non mi sorprende. In carnate in voi tutte le Muse (*Ep. 2, Sc.6:97-98*).

The second implication of Emma's performance has darker and more far-reaching connotations. In this scene, Rosselli is undoubtedly recalling the dance of Salomé before Herod. As Emma begins, both her actions and Rosselli's stage directions invoke the image of Salomé.

EMMA: *staccandosi dal balcone e fermandosi sul limitare della stanza,*

⁸¹ The wording of this particular phrase also alludes to the idea of Emma as a prostitute.

*senza entrare. E io seguo l'invito del dolce canto, e voglio danzare per voi,
Romney, sotto la luna....*

*Si drappeggia abilmente nella sciarpa, lasciandone ricadere i due lembi lungo le braccia
a guisa di ali; e al ritmo cadenzato del canto lontano incomincia una danza molle
e lenta, piena d'infinita grazia. Questa danza prese appunto da lei il nome di
<<danza dello scialle>> (Ep. 2, sc. 6:96-97).*

Rosselli's note about Emma's naming of the dance should not be overlooked. These words are written in the stage directions and, therefore, will never be heard by the audience. However, Rosselli wants the actors onstage to understand that Emma is performing a dance with a veil with certain connotations and that the character has named it the *dance of the shawl*. The only reason a playwright would impart such knowledge to the actors and director would be to be insure that the character is presented in a certain way to the audience, without having to give away the meaning in dialogue. Even to this day, the most common reference to a dance with veils is still that of Salomé. Reading Rosselli's stage directions now makes it difficult to consider any other meaning for Emma's performance.

Two versions of Salomé's story would have been well known at the time of Rosselli's writing, the biblical version and Oscar Wilde's 1891 play, *Salomé*. The story found in the Bible is recounted here:

6 On Herod's birthday the daughter of Herodias danced for the guests and pleased Herod so much 7 that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. 8 Prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist." 9 The king was distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he ordered that her request be granted 10 and had John beheaded in the prison. 11 His head was brought in on a platter and given to the girl, who carried it to her mother. 12 John's disciples came and took his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus (Matthew 14:6-12).

Although this version makes no mention of shawls, scarfs, or veils, it is clear that Salomé's dance had the charm and seductive quality to convince a very powerful man to behead John the Baptist, who was Herod's prisoner. In Wilde's version, the story is turned around and Herod begs Salomé to dance for him in exchange for a great promise: "Therefore dance for me. Dance for me, Salomé, I beseech thee. If thou dancest for me thou mayest ask of me what thou wilt, and I will give it thee. Yes, dance for me, Salomé, and whatsoever thou shalt ask of me I will give it thee, even unto the half of my kingdom" (23). An argument ensues between Herod and Salomé's mother, who does not want her to perform. In the end, however, Salomé consents to the dance and says, "I am waiting until my slaves bring perfumes to me and the seven veils, and take from off my feet my sandals" (24). Salomé then proceeds to dance barefoot on a floor covered with previously spilt blood, and although Herod believes that this is a bad omen, he allows the dance to continue. It is only after the dance has ended and Salomé makes her request that he understands the true meaning of what has occurred:

HEROD: [Salomé dances the dance of the seven veils.] Ah! wonderful! wonderful! You see that she has danced for me, your daughter. Come near, Salomé, come near, that I may give thee thy fee. Ah! I pay a royal price to those who dance for my pleasure. I will pay thee royally. I will give thee whatsoever thy soul desireth. What wouldst thou have? Speak.

SALOMÉ: [Kneeling.] I would that they presently bring me in a silver charger...

HEROD: [Laughing.] In a silver charger? Surely yes, in a silver charger. She is charming, is she not? What is it that thou wouldst have in a silver charger, O sweet and fair Salomé, thou that art fairer than all the daughters of Judaea? What wouldst thou

have them bring thee in a silver charger? Tell me. Whatsoever it may be, thou shalt receive it. My treasures belong to thee. What is it that thou wouldst have, Salomé?

SALOMÉ: [Rising.] The head of Iokanaan (26).

Recognizing Emma's same tactic, Romney shares Herod's sentiments of ill ease for the dance while Lord William and the rest of his companions watch with lustful eyes. Although Emma's behavior mimics that of Salomé, her own ambitions are not as gruesome. ever, if one takes into consideration a second text by Cavarero, the desires of Emma and Salomé may be more closely related than they first appear.

In Cavarero's *Stately Bodies* (2002) she returns to a Platonic discussion of government and society. This text is both further clarification of and an expansion on the earlier theoretical work begun in *In Spite of Plato*. Of particular interest to this discussion of *Emma Liona (Lady Hamilton)* is Cavarero's argument about the head and the body, wherein the body is the corporeal entity that keeps the soul trapped on earth.⁸² The soul's location within the head creates a logocentric philosophy (*Stately* 100-101). As we know, the soul belongs to the philosopher, the male, while the body belongs to the birthing vessel, the female. More so than in her previous work, Cavarero begins to focus on the idea of the female as nonpolitical, which evolved from Plato's myth of genesis in *Timaeus*.⁸³

Clearly a political model takes shape in the vertically arranged bodily hierarchy. The head that was its primary form now perches atop an ambulatory body and reigns over all potentially unruly, mortal, and fleshy parts below.

⁸² See introduction to this dissertation, specifically sub-section D.

⁸³ The female as a nonpolitical entity is discussed at length throughout the volume, *Beyond Equality and Difference*, to which Cavarero also contributes an article.

Women's lower role as defective latecomer requires that birth from sexed human bodies be possible only after man has generated woman himself, out of his own flaws (*Stately* 4).

The metaphor, like the political model, is also strikingly clear. The head, containing the soul that always was, represents man and is elevated not only figuratively, but also literally on top of the physical body or that which is seen. Included in this model of Man, as Cavarero points out, is the flawed afterthought: the female. She is the physical body governed by the thinking, rational head; she is the public governed by the head of state.

In the story of Salomé, the beautiful young woman requests the head of John the Baptist cut from his body, separating the governor from the governed. In a similar manner, Emma at the end of her dance has gained the favor of every man in the room. Lord Hamilton could easily be considered as a symbolic Herod willing to give Emma anything she wishes. Emma, like Salomé, knows that he will not refuse any request that she makes of him. When the guests leave and Lord William is still in a state of ecstasy from the dance, Emma asks him to give her what she wants. The future Lady Hamilton will seek to cut off the head of Gréville, at least symbolically. Until this moment he has governed her life, and she will remove his means of doing so anymore. She will cut off his means of existence and survival, his future inheritance from his uncle, by marrying Hamilton; thus securing his fortune for herself.

This idea of cutting off the head from the body, though literal in the Biblical story, is metaphorical in the case of *Emma Liona*. Salomé is motivated by revenge and so is Emma, to an extent. Is Emma truly seeking revenge only against Gréville, or is there a greater meaning in her actions? The system by which the two exact their revenge is more complicated. As evidenced in both plays, neither Emma nor Salomé can reach their ultimate goals by merely ridding the world of one man. In truth neither woman, given their respective eras and societal confines, can

accomplish a beheading (whether real or metaphorical) without the manipulation and subsequent willful participation of other men.

Emma does take her actions a step further than Salomé and will seek, as she notes in episode three, to rise higher than any woman before her, “arrivare tanto in alto, dove nessuna donna è ancora arrivata (*Emma Liona* 133). Obviously, this quote can now be read in two ways: either as accomplishing that which no other woman has, or to rise to the top of Plato’s “vertically arranged bodily hierarchy.” By the end of the drama it seems that she has, in some ways, accomplished both. Revenge is not only the objective of Emma’s dance, but it also represents the beginning of her rise to the top. From this point on she becomes not only the most powerful woman in her husband’s life (with, perhaps, the exception of the queen,) but Emma also enters the political arena, a place that *should* be closed off to her because of her gender. In *Stately Bodies*, Cavarero notes an association with the male identity in the political arena and the “confinement of the female identity to the immediacy of the family and domestic sphere” (14).

It is by way of her dance that she gains control, first of the domestic sphere. Later through its manipulation, like Penelope, she works to unravel the political and philosophical. From her now-impenetrable domestic space, she begins her ascent. The symbolism of Emma’s dance is without question; its implication is one of seduction and revenge that will drive Emma’s behavior until the very last moments of the play.

D.2 The Siren

From the first moment that Emma walks on the stage she, like her mythological ancestors, immediately engages and entrances every male in her presence—with rare exceptions. The descriptions of Emma, no doubt from countless biographies on the “angelic” subject, liken her to mythological, Shakespearean, and heavenly creatures. Before she is ever seen, her voice is

heard and her maestro remarks that she sings “come un angelo” (*Emma Liona* 10) The audience then quickly learns of an imprudent choice by Emma to perform in a public setting the night before. The effect that she has on her spectators is not surprising.

MRS. CADOGAN: *avvicinandosi al Maestro, dopo essersi assicurata che nessun altro può udirla.*

A Gréville questa cosa è dispiaciuta molto. Quando tornarono a casa successe un finimondo....Egli, di solito così calmo, così freddo, inveiva contro la mia creatura come un energumeno!

IL MAESTRO: Oh, senti, senti! Ma com'è andata? Madamigella Emma non ne parlava volentieri, si capiva; e non ho osato insistere....

MRS. CADOGAN: È andata così. Pare che una damigella sonasse la spinetta; a un certo punto accennò il motivo di una canzoncina; sapete, quella che canta sempre Emma con voi....

IL MAESTRO: Ah, so, so.

MRS. CADOGAN: Allora, proprio senza pensarci, Emma si mette a cantare. Nella sala si fa un gran silenzio; la gente le si affolla intorno; e quando finisce, scoppia un applauso fragoroso! (*Ep. I, sc. I: 11-12*).

Throughout the first act a picture of Emma emerges as a beautiful enchantress with an equally beautiful voice, the stuff of fairy tales. It is not before long, however, that a different image begins to materialize—that of a Siren. Hints of this creature abound in *Emma Liona* and, by the third episode, Rosselli actually uses the word “sirena” to describe the protagonist.

Sirens were sea nymphs who could be found anywhere, with their goal being to “lure sailors to their death with their song” (Roman 443). They were often referred to as the

companions of Kore and skilled in singing, as well as playing the flute and lyre. This description of the mythological creatures can easily be applied to Rosselli's play: the excerpt above is just one example of many. Emma's siren-like qualities appear light and unbecoming at the beginning of the play, growing darker as the play reaches its end. In the first episode, described above, Emma boasts an angelic voice and a talent for playing the spinet—and although not a flute or a lyre, the musical reference is not without significance. In the second episode, as shown in the previous sub-section, Emma's beauty and dance can hypnotize men. However, in the third episode of the play the siren's more sinister qualities start to appear. In an effort to convince Sir Nelson to stay a while in Naples after a successful sea campaign, Lord Hamilton employs Emma knowing full well her capabilities. His words to her are simple, and yet full of meaning:

NELSON: Mi rincresce, Milady, ma credo che dovrò partire domani.

EMMA: Domani! Perché tanta fretta?

LORD HAMILTON: No, no, vi pare. Non avete ancora veduto Napoli, si può dire. E, quel che è anche più importante, Napoli non ha ancora veduto voi...È opportuno, è necessario sfruttare – scusate la parola – la curiosità della popolazione, il suo entusiasmo per voi, rappresentante dell'Inghilterra. Capite ciò che questo significa in un momento simile!

NELSON: Non sono fatto per la diplomazia, Milord.

LORD HAMILTON: Ma questa non è diplomazia! *a Emma*. Persuadetelo voi....

Scambio di saluti. Lord Hamilton esce (Ep.3, sc.6:136-137).

Emma does indeed persuade Nelson to stay and, in doing so, marks the beginning of her fall.

Later in the same scene Nelson describes a nightmare that he had, which would be better

described as a premonition. In this dream, he tells of his own undoing by a siren after a victory at sea.

EMMA: Una vittoria....su chi, contro chi?

NELSON: E contro chi dunque, se non contro i Francesi, gli eterni nemici del nostro paese? Ma dove? Come? Quando? Non so! *Con esaltazione*. So che nessuno era grande quanto me; nessuno quanto me degno della lode del mondo. E a un tratto *con voce agitata, guardando davanti a sé*. ecco sorgere dal fondo del mare una Sirena con le sembianze di Nemesei. Ella si aggrappò alla mia nave chiamandomi dolcissimamente per nome; e nulla era più stano e più terribile di quella voce angelica e di quell'aspetto di Furia. E mentre al suono di quella voce qualcosa dentro di me si scioglieva e si disfaceva, le acque del golfo nel quale stavo per entrare si andavano popolando di cadaveri. Li vedevo uscire dalle profondità con gli occhi spalancati, e il braccio teso verso di me in atto minaccioso; erano dieci, cento, mille! A ogni richiamo della voce fascinatrice uno nuovo ne sorgeva dagli abissi; e per ogni mano di morto che si levava contro di me dal mare, una foglia di alloro cadeva dalla mia fronte. *Affannosamente*. Io volevo far cambiare rotta alla nave, fuggire quel golfo pullulante di morte; ma la Sirena con mano dolce e ferma me lo impediva, guidando la nave a sua volontà, *Un silenzio*. Milady, vi confesso che il sogno mi ha stranamente turbato, e che vedo in esso un ammonimento di lasciare Napoli al più presto (*Ep.3, sc.6:140-141*).

Although Emma reassures him that the dream is not an ill omen, Sir Nelson should have left Napoli immediately. Instead, Lady Hamilton convinces him that they are kindred spirits with the same goals and desires. The links between Emma and a Siren are far from coincidental and,

taken as a whole, there is no denying that Rosselli intended Lady Hamilton to echo the mythological creature.

In the fourth episode, the supporting characters confirm that Emma was indeed the siren of Nelson's nightmare. In the following excerpt the siren with the sweet voice who enticed Nelson in his nightmare is finally given a name, and it is Lady Hamilton.

BARTUELLO:⁸⁴ State zitti, è meglio. E badate: se Nelson fosse stato solo avrebbe rispettato, credo, da uomo d'onore quell patto: ma solo non era, purtroppo. Sulla stessa nave ammiraglia, mandata dalla regina Maria Carolina che temeva appunto gli scrupoli di Nelson e non sognava se non le più atroci vendetta, sapete chi c'era? Coi che per anni e anni stata la più fiera nemica di ogni moto di libertà; l'ispiratrice più accanita di ogni persecuzione; quell'avventuriera, quella mala femmina, quella basgascia della Hamilton, moglie l'ambasciatore inglese: la sua ganza infine, che dopo aver fatto di Nelson il proprio schiavo compiacendosi a trascinarselo dietro, a mostra per tutti i ritrovi di Napoli, gli si attaccava ora ai fianchi come una piovra immonda per succhiarne il sangue eroe e farne sangue di traditore! (*Ep. 4, sc. 3:175-176*).

Bartuello goes on to recount that during this campaign Nelson, under the influence of Emma, of course, was responsible for the hanging of several revolutionaries in Napoli—including Admiral Caracciolo, who was not only executed but also weighted down so that his body would sink to

⁸⁴ Bartuello is an Italian national who took refuge in France after the siege in the Gulf of Naples at the hand of Nelson and the Hamiltons. In this scene, he recounts the actions of Nelson, whom the English sailors view only with the highest esteem.

the bottom of the sea.⁸⁵ In addition, we learn that there was much controversy surrounding his execution and orders were followed out not to law, but to Emma's will. On the third day after Caracciolo's death,

BARTUELLO: ...si vede da lontano un viluppo che le onde spingevano verso il vascello dove si trovavano il Re, Nelson e la Hamilton. E fissando videro un cadaver, tutto il fianco fuori dell'acqua, ed a viso alzato, coi capelli sparsi e stillanti, andare verso di loro quasi minaccioso e veloce. <<Caracciolo!>> balbettò il Re, tremante. <<Che cosa vuole quell morto?>> Che cosa voleva? ...Maledirli, nell'eternità per il male voluto e compiuto! (*Ep.4, sc.3:178*).

In these two passages the audience learns that not only did Nelson's prophecy come true, but also that it did so by Emma's hand. Just before the curtain falls, Emma's own involvement and her own feelings of guilt regarding Caracciolo's murder are also confirmed. Emma, while looking out the window into the storm, appears to see the dead admiral's ghost: this drives her into a final fit of madness.

EMMA: Ah! Dio! Eccolo! Eccolo! Chiudi, chiudi! Non voglio Vederlo!...

Getta un grido e, invasa da folle terrore, corre a rifugiarsi all'angolo estremo dalla stanza, di contro alla finestra.

GRÉVILLE: *alzandosi egli pure di scatto.* Chi? Chi? Emma, vaneggi?

EMMA: *fuori di sè, indicando con mano tremante un punto fuori dalla finestra.* No! No!

Lui! Sempre lui! Caracciolo! Diritto in piedi sull'acqua coll'indice verso di me,

⁸⁵ Rosselli gives Admiral Caracciolo's first name as Antonio, but it was actually Francesco. This is one of the rare occasions in the drama where she does not cite the actual name for this, but perhaps there is some other reason.

benchè gli abbiano attaccato al collo una pietra di duecento libbre! Là – si avanza –
si avanza da questa parte dal vento...(*Ep.4, sc.5:200*).

At this point, Emma is overcome by lunacy and the Siren is no more.

E. Stolen Gazes and Symbolic Matricide

The question of gaze, especially the reciprocal one passed between mother and daughter, is probably the most important aspect of this analysis. In *Emma Liona*, the protagonist is robbed of her daughter's gaze not once, but twice. In both cases, it is through the will of men that this occurs. These two distinct robberies serve to bookend Emma's life, as well as her rise and fall. Again, we must look to Caverero's theory in order to understand the implications and repercussions of these losses: not only upon Emma, but also upon the plot of the entire play.

As the play opens, Emma appears a cheerful, young woman who is already somewhat aware of her ability to entice and manipulate the men in her life.⁸⁶ What emerges later during an exchange with her close friend and confidant, Romney, is that Emma is full of sadness, which she masks with her beauty and talent. Emma, we learn, has been stripped of her motherhood by Gréville. He has forced her to send her child, a daughter also named Emma, to live elsewhere in exchange for caring for both Emmas—as well as Mrs. Cadogan, Emma's mother. Reading this

⁸⁶ This is very evident in the scenes of the first and second episodes in which she is surrounded by men. Several times in episode 1 she alters her appearance and attitude in order to appease Gréville and entice his friends (scene 7 is an excellent example). A similar situation unfolds in episode 2 with Lord Hamilton and his companions. Her tactic changes and her sweetness fades in the third and fourth episodes, as referenced by the previous sections of this chapter. A particularly telling scene occurs in episode 1, scenes 3 and 7. Emma first appears in an outfit that is out of character for her, but drawn directly from one of the real George Romney's paintings, *The Seamstress*. She is beautiful, yet demure and serious. Later, it is revealed that she dressed this way, intentionally, as a way of manipulating Gréville's affections.

play with Caverero's theory of symbolic matricide in mind, it becomes clear that this loss sets all other events in motion.

Emma Liona, like Signora Gianforti in *L'illusione*, is also a tainted woman and neither male companion desires a *casa contaminate* (*L'illusione* 30). In the case of *L'illusione* it is easy to *rehabilitate* the children, since they are the products of Signor Gianforti, but in *Emma Liona* the situation is much different. Though Rosselli does not say specifically who the father of Emma Liona's child is, we know that it is not Gréville. From the beginning he appears to be nothing but a benevolent provider, in love with Emma. Flora Fraser tells us that the real Charles Gréville wanted nothing to do with Emma's child and, though he agreed to pay for her care and keeping, he would not allow her in the home he shared with Emma for fear of what neighbors might think. Both Grévilles, real and fictional, sought to remove not only the physical presence of Liona's bastard daughter, but also the idea of her from their existence. In the play, Emma can speak freely about her child with Romney. In truth, she carries the burden of the loss of her child with her at all times, but tries to gloss over it with banal conversations about the size of her daughter's nose and whether or not she will turn out to be a beauty.

EMMA: ...Forse, perche quell passato m'ha lasciato un ricordo vivente e palpitante: la mia cara bambina, la mia piccola Emma! Ah! potessi averla qui!...

ROMNEY: Perché non lo chiedete a Gréville? Non farebbe qualunque cosa per voi?

EMMA: Ma non questa! Me l'ha imposta come condizione assoluta, la separazione dalla mia bambina. E ho dovuto chinare il capo, anche per il suo bene. Ora infatti, non le manca nulla. Ma che dolore per me! (*Dopo una pausa, di nuovo gaia.*) Sapete, la nonna scrive che adesso i capelli le crescono benissimo. Prima non c'era verso che volessero crescere...Peccato che non possiate vederla. Ha gli occhi azzurri, il

naso...ecco, il naso non è molto bello, ma spero che non diventerà troppo grande.
Che cosa credete? (*Ep. I, sc. 4:23-24*).

Later, Emma follows Romney's advice and discusses the situation with Gréville, but is refused once again.

EMMA: *con timidezza* Una sola, un'unica cosa manca alla mia felicità completa. Oh se il mio Carlo me la concedesse, sarei la donna più felice della terra!...

GRÉVILLE: *seccato* Via, Emma, non insistere. Te l'ho già detto tante volte: sono dispostissimo a provvedere al mantenimento della tua bambina, come del resto sto facendo, e in seguito penserò anche alla sua educazione; ma in quanto a farla venir qua...no. Assolutamente. Se sta tanto bene dov'è.

EMMA: *con intense passione, giungendo le mani*

Ma tu non sai come le voglio bene, come io abbia finora vissuto della sua vita unicamente.

GRÉVILLE: E non potrai occupartene anche da lontano? Non chiedere troppo.

EMMA: *con slancio* È vero! È vero! Sono un'ingrata. Perdonami (*Ep. I, sc. 7:33*).

Emma is conflicted between the life of relative luxury she now enjoys under the care of Gréville and the one of poverty she could have with her daughter. In Fraser's *Beloved Emma* she references letters between the real Emma and Gréville, which validate much of Rosselli's script. The following is an excerpt from a letter to Emma from Charles, arranging for their new life together.

You should part with your maid, & take another name, by degrees I would get you a new set of acquaintance, & by keeping your own secret, & nobody about you having it in their power to betray you, I may expect to see you respected & admired. Thus far relates to yourself, as to the child, Sir H.⁸⁷ may be informed of circumstances which may

⁸⁷ Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh is Emma's former companion and the father of her child (Fraser 194).

reasonably make him doubt & it is not worth while to make it a subject of altercation. its mother shall obtain its kindness from me & it shall never want (320).

Fraser furnishes several other exchanges between Gréville and Emma around the time of her daughter's second birthday. She asks him again to change his mind and bring her daughter to their home. The theme of all his letters is the same and is reflected by Rosselli's dialogue.⁸⁸ He will either care for and protect Emma's child from a distance, or not at all. The choice is ultimately Emma's. However, she realizes that her daughter will have a better future if Gréville provides for her and she remains disconnected from the child. No matter how much Emma wishes to be reunited again with her daughter, just as Demeter while Hades holds her child captive, Gréville will not concede. He will not even compromise in the way that the lord of the underworld did. Unlike his mythological predecessor, Gréville did not understand that destroying the gaze between Emma and her child would only result in death and destruction. He will eventually come to understand this.

In the last episode of the drama, the spectator learns along with Gréville that Emma was denied the gaze of her second daughter—which will send Emma into fits of madness. With her lover, Sir Horatio Nelson,⁸⁹ she conceived a child. When born, her daughter was given the name Horatia and the paternity of the child is undeniable. However, her maternity is kept a secret and Emma must pretend to be the child's governess. This demotion, as discussed in the chapter on *L'Illusione*, reduces Emma's role to only that of the birthing vessel. Emma, thus robbed on two

⁸⁸See locations 892-1031 in Frasers biography, for more information.

⁸⁹ The subject of Horatio Nelson and Emma Lyon is one that deserves some attention in a longer research work. There are several sources that exist on the subject of this "power couple," but with the exception of their child and the fact that Emma is not allowed to acknowledge her actual relationship to her daughter, Nelson's role in Rosselli's play, is relatively small and unimportant. As Pugliese notes in his article, this play is focused on Emma and not the English sailor (6).

occasions of her children's gazes, then uses her maternal power in destructive ways, as did Demeter.

A third act of symbolic matricide is committed in the play, but the responsible party this time is actually Emma, not one of the men in her life. As the third episode of *Emma Liona* opens the audience quickly realizes that Emma has succeeded in marrying Lord Hamilton, thus elevating her social status. However, this is not a positive accomplishment for anyone but Emma. The townspeople who have gathered in her salon are frank about their impressions of the new Lady Hamilton:

TERZO GENTILUOMO: *con scherno.*

Non c'è che dire. Sua Eccellenza ha imparato presto l'arte di far fare anticamera.

SECONDO GENTILUOMO: È un'arte che non aveva bisogno d'imparare: la conosceva già da un pezzo per propria esperienza....

PRIMO GENTILUOMO: Già, fin da quando era serva in casa del dottor Graliani, a Londra!

TERZO GENTILUOMO: Ciò che non c'impedisce, peraltro, di portar qui le nostre suppliche quando abbiamo bisogno di ricorrere in alte sfere.

PRIMO GENTILUOMO: E come fare altrimenti? Da quando Emma Liona è diventata la moglie legittima di Lord Hamilton, la padrona è lei, a Corte. Se si vuol ottenere qualcosa bisogna passare di qua.

SECONDO GENTILUOMO: Pare impossibile che l'Inghilterra, di solito così pudica, tolleri di essere rappresentata da chi era, fino a pochi mesi fa, l'amante del suo Ambasciatore!

PRIMO GENTILUOMO: Però quando Lord Hamilton e Lady Hamilton sono andati in Inghilterra la Regina Carlotta si rifiutò di riceverli.

SECONDO GENTILUOMO: Dite davvero? Che scandalo! (*Ep.3, sc.1:112-113*).

The power over men that Emma alluded to at the close of the first act is now well within in her grasp. From this exchange, it is clear that she has found a way to garner a position of power in spite of her impure past. Emma's power is strengthened by her friendship with the queen, another strong female.

Those waiting for an audience with Lady Hamilton are reluctant to ask for her help, but do so out of necessity. In attendance are the three unnamed men from the previous dialogue and a *gentlewoman*. The mens' requests will never be known because, upon Emma's appearance, the woman runs to her and begs for assistance.

EMMA: *fredda*. Mi rincresce, signori, ma stamani non ho tempo per dare udienza.

LA GENTILDONNA: *gettandosi ai piedi di Emma*.

Vi supplico, Milady, non mandatemi via senza prima ascoltarmi! *con disperazione*

Domani sarebbe troppo tardi.

EMMA: Non è possibile.... Rialzatevi....

LA GENTILDONNA: *con affanno sempre crescente, rigettando indietro il velo*.

Milady....forse sapete chi sono....Mio figlio....La Giunta di Stato....

con un grido soffocato di bestia ferita

....l'ha condannato a morte! Eppure al processo non è risultata nessuna prova contro di lui! Nessuna! Com'è possibile questa cosa atroce! È innocente, vi giuro, è innocente! Non si è mai occupato di politica, non ha mai avuto nessun rapporto con francesi...(*Ep.3, sc.1:119*).

Lady Hamilton's response to the woman who pleads for the life of her only child is cold, if not heartless, to say the least. It is clear that Emma Liona is indeed dead, and a woman with only ambition and revenge in mind stands in her place:

EMMA: La giunta di Stato sa quell che fa. Se ha condannato, e segno che la condanna è meritata. Mi rincresce, ma non posso far niente per voi. Si cerca di minare la sicurezza dello Stato in tutti i modi, e quando si è colti, si grida all'innocenza. Solita storia.

LA GENTILDONNA: Vi supplico!...Non ho che quel figlio! È la mia sola ragione di vita! Il mio sostegno....La mia unica gioia....Milady, una vostra parola detta a Sua Maestà lo può salvare! Ditela, ve ne scongiuro! (*Ep.3, sc.1:120*).

In one swift move Emma denies another mother the gaze of her only child, and though a male (as explored in the section on *L'Illusione*,) even this denial is detrimental to the mother. The desperate mother counters Emma's cruelty by remarking "Oh, se sapeste che cosa vuol dire essere mamma, non mi neghereste questa grazia!" (*Emma Liona* 120). The spectator understands immediately the pain this statement causes Lady Hamilton, even if the son's mother does not. The natural expectation would be that this comment would speak to the mother in Emma, but it only serves to steel her further— through Rosselli notes a brief physical reaction in the protagonist:

EMMA: *a queste ultime parole trasale, ha come una vertigine. Nella sua voce è un tremito, mentre mormora con accento appena percettibile:*

In ogni donna c'è una mamma....(*Ep.3, sc.1:120*).

This moment, in which Lady Hamilton clearly recalls her past and the daughter that is no longer within her sight, is fleeting. She recovers and pushes the mother away from her. It is clear that she will not help this woman and her son will die as a result of Emma's refusal to help her.

What has happened here is without question an extension of Cavarero's theory of Demeter. At this point in the drama, Emma has lived without her daughter's gaze for seven years, and there is no mention of her child again until the very last scene of the play. In the myth of Demeter, the goddess sinks into a depression and the world becomes cold and vegetation dies almost immediately. Life on earth dies. Cavarero points out to us that this is the definition of maternal power: not only the ability to reproduce, but also the choice not to, thus causing life to cease to exist/occur. Rosselli's play takes this idea of maternal power to the extreme and Emma, in her well-hidden depression, does not choose not to produce but instead allows death to occur.

At the moment in which Lady Hamilton denies the other mother's request to save her child, she actually succeeds in killing two people. First and most obviously, she robs another mother of her child's gaze, which we know will result in the death of the woman's son. Emma at this point is equally representative of both Demeter (having her child's gaze robbed from her by Gréville) and Hades (robbing the gaze from another woman), while her power is both figurative (by way of Cavarero's theory of maternal power) and literal (in the fact that the townspeople must come to her for help.) The female figure here is at a pivotal point. She has option to choose one type of power over the other. She wields both though without concern for anyone else, and one wonders if she would have acted in the same manner if the woman's child had been female. In many ways, Emma recalls Demeter in this scenario. It may seem cruel and unwarranted but, like the goddess, she chooses not to act—and by not acting, the son will die.

Ultimately, Lady Hamilton chooses politics, ambition, and eventual war over motherhood. She begins to embody all those traits normally assigned to men in this particular era, as a means of forgetting the gaze that has been stolen from her (Vegetti Finzi 139). The choice that Lady Hamilton makes succeeds in destroying what small part may have been left of Emma Liona; the mother inside her. It is, without question, the point of no return for her. The rest of the play casts the protagonist in a much more negative light, leaving no traces of the innocent young girl and mother whose angelic voice was heard before she set foot on the stage.

Throughout the course of the play, the character of Emma seems to travel down her dark path because of Gréville's ill treatment, with the catalyst being the moment in which she learns about his impending marriage to a more socially acceptable woman. However, it can be argued that that particular moment was instead the breaking point, after a lifetime of poor treatment by others coupled with the loss of her child's gaze. At first, it may seem as if Emma's choices are only those of an angry, vengeful woman scorned by her lover. In her last conversation with Gréville, though, Emma's true motivations are revealed. She begins by showing him the error of his ways.

EMMA: *con ironia sempre più sferzante.*

Dite davvero? Come mi rincresce! Credetemi, nipote mio, che avessi menomamente supposto che le peripezie tristi o liete della mia vita potessero avere una qualsiasi eco in voi, io...non so, avrei cercato di modificarle secondo i vostri desideri. Ma non lo supponevo: in verità non le supponevo. Peccato, perché, tacendo, vi siete reso complice di tutte le mie nefandità! (*Ep.4, sc.5:188*).

.....

EMMA: E ora osate rinfacciarmi la mia condotta? Voi? Ma che altro ho fatto nella mia vita, se non quello che voi stesso m'insegnaste? *Andandogli vicino con impeto.*

Tu mi scagliasti lontana da te con l'inganno; e io presi l'arma stessa di cui ti eri servito per liberarti di me, e con essa ho compiuto il mio cammino. Sì; ho fatto del male; sì, ho tradito tutto e tutti, a incominciare da me stessa; sì, non c'è stata da allora un'ora della mia vita in cui io non abbia audacemente giocato col mio e con l'altrui destino; sì sono diventata Lady Hamilton; ma Lady Hamilton sappilo, è opera tua, creatura tua! (*Ep.4, sc.5:193-194*).

Though she places the blame on Gréville, she goes on to state the real reason for her actions and choices in life.

EMMA: ...la maternità, per certe donne, è delitto e castigo....

Guardando fissa davanti a sé, con accento cupo.

Ah sì! Castigo soprattutto. Perché la mia maternità, fiorita per mia sventura ancora una volta, si vede negata perfino la dolcezza di chiamare col nome di figlia la propria creatura! (*Ep.4, sc.5:194*).

At this point, Emma tells Gréville that she also had a child with Sir Nelson and, though she is the girl's mother, she must pretend that she is only her guardian. Nelson left the child in Emma's care, on the condition that she divulge her identity. Once again, Emma is denied her role as mother.

EMMA: ...è mia figlia. Mia figlia!

Con lacrime nella voce.

Ma ella non lo sa, non lo saprà mai. Perché se esser figlia di Nelson è gioia e gloria, esser figlia di Lady Hamilton sarebbe disonore e vergogna. Così, fra queste due

maternità soffocate e compresse, sta la mia vita: come un torrente torbido
impetuoso scorre fra due rive fiorite, presso le quali vorrebbe sostare un momento
a riposare, e non può. Ecco quello che io sono; ecco quello che tu hai fatto di me.
(*Ep. 4, sc. 5:195*).

This concept of name and reputation appear more than once during the drama. In the same act, Lore, the young sailor who brought Emma safely to Calais, is enamored of her and wishes to inscribe her name on his ship. She refuses him, noting that her name “Porterebbe sfortuna alla vostra piccola nave” (*Emma Liona* 168). As well, at the end of the second episode she remarks that Emma Liona is dead, leaving Lady Hamilton in her place. This name change results in a surge of power for the character. Emma Liona is denied the gaze of two children in the play and in her actual life. Perhaps though, it is the loss of her second daughter’s gaze which is more traumatic for her as a mother. Her first daughter knew and acknowledged Emma as her mother; however, with her second child, she is not even allowed to bear this title.⁹⁰ It is this last act of cruelty inflicted upon her that appears to have sent her into a downward spiral, emotionally and mentally, from which she will not recover.

Moreover, considering Rosselli’s own *Memorie*, it seems unlikely that she would create a female figure whose rise and fall are dependent upon the men in her life. In fact, in her writings she discusses life after divorce and the death of her husband and then, later, after the deaths of her three children. She notes a difficulty after the losses of her children that she did not undergo

⁹⁰ In *Beloved Emma*, many excerpts from letters between Emma and Gréville regarding her first child, discuss this notion of being called mother. Emma’s own words show that she grappled with this idea of being and feeling like a mother in reality and in name. She notes that she “truly is a mother, when she is called mother” by her child (Loc. 579). It is an interesting point regarding the fact that she was known as Horatia’s mother. At least the younger Emma knew who her mother was.

after the loss of her husband.⁹¹ In her own life Rosselli goes forward after each loss, because she has first other children and later grandchildren to care for. Otherwise, the possibility of sinking into an abyss similar to Emma's seemed possible. In fact, she describes the days after Aldo's death as "una pazzia" in which she felt "un rancore sordo" (*Memorie* 155-156). What is certain, though, is the fact that even when her marriage did fail, she was the strength and the backbone of the family. She provided for her children, she insured they had a good education, and that they were morally good people. In addition, when choosing a city in which to relocate her family for which she was now both father and mother, Amelia chose Florence, where her children would be surrounded by strong female figures.⁹² Rosselli's own resilience and strong character no doubt influenced in some way her female figures, even though she often cautioned about making connections between her life and the lives of her characters.

F. Conclusion

In truth, a more in-depth analysis of this play alone could stand alone as a research project. Aside from the small seeds of ideas that have been covered above, Rosselli peppered this drama with many thematic questions, several allusions to George Romney's paintings of the real Lady Hamilton, political debates, and of course a female figure with many layers still to be

⁹¹ There are marked differences in the way Rosselli discusses first, the death of her husband, almost as if it was an afterthought, and later, the deaths of her children (*Memorie* 113). Though she says she lost the love of her life when Joe Rosselli died, it was the death of her son, Aldo that appears to have affected her the most and in a very negative way, to the point of madness. She writes of confining herself to her room for days and refusing even to see her other children (152-156). Emma concluded her memoirs at a point in her life, before Carlo and Nello were assassinated, even though she wrote the book, after the fact. Calloni writes that her pain was so great that she did not attend the boys' funeral, but instead chose to mourn in private (201).

⁹² In *Memorie*, Rosselli spends dozens of pages talking about the relatives and friends that were there to support her and her children in Florence. The overwhelming majority of these people were women with strong personalities and solid moral characters. See pages 48-112 in Rosselli's memoirs for more information about her female role models, which obviously had a great impact on her life and work.

peeled back. By way of *Emma Liona* and this analysis, it is clear that Rosselli was capable of a drama rich in character but also in substance. In comparison to other works of this era, it is comparable to that of her male contemporaries and in some ways better, as Rosselli defined her own path and rewrote the traditional theatrical formula from her own perspective. It is truly unfortunate that *Emma Liona (Lady Hamilton)* remained unknown for so long.

CONCLUSION

In the preceding pages, I have analyzed only a sample of Rosselli's dramatic works. She was, as noted earlier, one of the most prolific female playwrights of her era. As shown in this dissertation, her plays (once thoroughly examined) reveal a truly talented author who time and again exemplified the female figure in her works. As well, her plays spoke to the *questione femminile* that is still important today. At the end of this project, a few conclusions can be drawn as to Rosselli's own playwriting formula, as there are several through lines in each play. First, in each there is a similar character structure including the female protagonist in search of freedom from the patriarchal order: Olga, Emma Gianforti, Lady Hamilton; the husband/intended, who seeks to maintain the status quo: Silvio, Alberto Gianforti, Grèville; the confidant, who knows the truth behind the woman: Giorgio, Verardi, Romney; and finally, the mother/mother figure who maintains the maternal continuum even when there is no daughter's gaze: Virginia, Maria, Mrs. Cadogan.

In addition, Rosselli in some way always calls attention to the question of the public versus the private, by including characters representative of the outside world looking in on the domestic sphere: such as Teresa in *Anima*, Signora Montano in *L'illusione*, and finally the three gentlemen who call on Lady Hamilton in *Emma Liona*. Each of these characters invades, albeit temporarily, the protagonist's space, while also personifying the idea of the reality of what is versus the perception of what seems to be.

A final comparative look at the three plays must involve the protagonists, the female figures of Rosselli. In many ways, they are one in the same—or rather, three sides of the same

character. These three women appear to evolve from one to the other. In Olga we find the seeds of Emma Gianforti and, within her, the seeds of Lady Hamilton. Whereas Olga's story ends happily (despite the death of Silvio), Emma Gianforti's is more neutral, leaving the audience wondering what will become of her. Finally Emma Liona, as we know, meets an unhappy end of loneliness, financial ruin, and madness. There is an obvious transition and growth from one protagonist to the next, and this is perhaps the strength of Rosselli's writing. She creates three women who would recognize themselves in the other, and vice versa. In doing so, she does exactly what Cavarero proposes almost a century later: she creates female figures in which we women can recognize ourselves, as well.

As Amelia Pincherle Rosselli wrote while exiled in America at the end of the Second World War, the problem of the *woman question* was still not solved. At the time Amelia seemed surprised that the answer had not yet come, and that after decades of fighting for freedom and their rights women were still being treated as inferior to their male colleagues, and that laws did not reflect equality among all. Looking back now some 70 years after Rosselli's reflection on the situation in Italian women's literature, she would probably wonder why the problem was still not resolved. The research in this dissertation is just a small contribution to a seemingly never-ending quest that we can and should chip away at, one author at a time. It seems appropriate then, to end with a quote that also concludes Cavarero's *In Spite of Plato*, as it is extremely applicable to not only the question of the female figure in literature but also to the figure of Rosselli:

Nonetheless, when at the final, most recent hour – having, for unfathomable reasons woven her way up to human logos via the feminine – it is her turn to *know*, when perhaps this female deity will demand that the splendor of her origins find grateful, knowing names in her daughters' speech (120).

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