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**Title:** Rita Pavone's *Musicarelli*: Rethinking Genre and (Young) Women's Representation

**Journal Issue:** *gender/sexuality/italy*, 4 (2017)

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**Publication date:** September 2017

**Publication info:** *gender/sexuality/italy*, "Themed Section"

**Permalink:** <http://www.gendersexualityitaly.com/4-rita-pavones-musicarelli-rethinking-genre-and-young-womens-representation>

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**Abstract:** This essay examines Rita Pavone's star image and musical films of the 1960s, including a close analysis of two of her most famous *musicarelli*, *Rita la zanzara* (*Rita the Mosquito*, 1966) and its sequel *Non stuzzicate la zanzara* (*Don't Sting the Mosquito*, 1967). While studies on the postwar "woman's film" have focused primarily on melodramas, this paper discusses how Pavone's comedic musicals offered alternative narratives of female empowerment for young women during the economic boom. In addition to Pavone's own unconventional depictions of femininity, this study illustrates how the singer's *musicarelli* adapt, alter, and parody generic conventions typically associated with female narratives while utilizing recurring acts of impersonation (masquerade, imitation, and cross-dressing) to highlight gender subjectivity as performative, fluid, and in flux.

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## Rita Pavone's *Musicarelli*: Rethinking Genre and (Young) Women's Representation

STEPHANIE HOTZ

Rita Pavone, with her signature cropped red hair and energetic performances, was one of the most iconic young singers in Italy during the 1960s. Like many other emerging young musicians at the onset of the economic boom, Pavone began her acting career with starring roles in the popular yet short-lived film cycle known as the *musicarello*, a large collection of musical films produced primarily between 1958 and 1971.<sup>1</sup> Similar to the U.S. rock'n'roll films of the 1950s, the *musicarello* targeted youth audiences—those in their late teens and early twenties—through relatable narratives and protagonists. The films were star vehicles for Pavone and young pop stars of the '60s, including Gianni Morandi, Adriano Celentano, and Caterina Caselli, all of whom became symbols of a new youth entertainment in postwar Italy. While cultural historians have briefly noted Pavone's androgynous fashion choices—she often performed in men's fashion—and her childlike physicality, her *musicarelli* and queered star image remain largely unexamined.<sup>2</sup> This article will discuss how Pavone's most famous films, which represent a large subset of female-centered *musicarelli*, are queered in terms of non-normative gender and generic conventions, and how these musical films encourage new perspectives on positioning female narratives within film genre studies.

Pavone's presence in Italian postwar entertainment spanned all media, as did many of the *musicarelli* singers, but two of her most well known musical films, *Rita la zanzara* (*Rita the Mosquito*, 1966) and its sequel *Non stuzzicate la zanzara* (*Don't Sting the Mosquito*, 1967), place strong emphasis on the acts of performance, both through fictional characterization and narratives about an aspiring singer. Within my analyses of these films in particular, the act of performing is closely linked to the way in which gender and youth subjectivity are often performative by nature. My study situates Pavone's performances and star persona within a queer discourse not only by analyzing her cinematic depictions of fluctuating or unstable femininity, but also by investigating the ways in which her films queer traditional female narratives through adaptation and parody. Within this framework, my analyses demonstrate how the *zanzara* films call upon, and at times parody, genres that traditionally targeted female audiences—specifically the “woman's film,” schoolgirl comedies, and fairy tales. Using Pavone's films as a case study, this article seeks to expand current understanding of the “woman's film” and female narratives by examining how the *musicarelli* provided alternative models of female empowerment for its youth audience.

### *Rita Pavone as a Queer Icon of 1960s Female Empowerment*

Much like her fictional characters, Pavone's star persona offered models of non-normative femininity and gendered behavior, and I believe that this facet of Pavone's public image contributed to her films' break from conventional female narratives. Thin, freckled, and sporting red cropped hair, Pavone often alternated in her adoption of gender-normative clothing in the '60s, from wearing dresses and skirts in one performance to pants and suspenders in another. Wertmüller even cast

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<sup>1</sup> I refer to the *musicarello* films as a “cycle” rather than as a genre, sub-genre, or *filone* because of their limited production period (just over a decade), and because they represent conflicts and anxieties specific to their historical context, such as the emerging consumer culture and changing social and gender dynamics of the economic boom. For a more detailed definition and discussion about this term see Amanda Ann Klein's *American Film Cycles: Reframing Genres, Screening Social Problems, and Defining Subcultures* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Pavone had starring roles in the following 1960s *musicarelli*: *Rita la figlia Americana* (*Rita the American Daughter*, 1965), *Rita la zanzara* (*Rita the Mosquito*, 1966), *Non stuzzicate la zanzara* (*Don't Sting the Mosquito*, 1967), *Little Rita nel West* (*Little Rita of the West/Crazy Westerners*, 1967), and *La feldmarescialla: Rita fugge...lui corre...egli scappa* (*The Crazy Kids of the War*, 1967).

Pavone as the unruly boy protagonist in the RAI television musical miniseries *Il giornalino di Gian Burrasca* (1964-1965), an adaptation of Luigi Bertelli's (under the pseudonym Vamba) children's book from 1907. It is likely that this casting decision was based on Pavone's childlike physical features and sprightly performances, but perhaps also on the fact that her "androgynous body" was a unique public image "in a symbolic universe still in thrall to traditional images of masculinity and femininity."<sup>3</sup> Although this is the only performance in which the star is actually cast as a male character, Pavone's *musicarelli* are exemplary of how she used fashion choices to challenge "traditional images of femininity" and create alternative narratives of female empowerment through masquerade (such as cross-dressing, disguises, and impersonations).

The few studies on Pavone's career discuss her as a cultural symbol of popular mass media and the intermediality of the postwar entertainment industry. Pavone, like most of the *musicarello* stars, appeared on television, film, radio, and in magazines, so it is unsurprising that current studies on the star focus on her intermediality. Given the cultural and economic context of the 1960s and Italy's postwar modernization—a period in which the entertainment industry was becoming largely commercialized and representative of a postwar consumer culture—these discussions are aptly observant of the socio-cultural context of Pavone's performances. In fact, during her period of fame, Umberto Eco dedicated an entire section to Pavone in his essay on popular music and mass culture, "La canzone di consumo" (loosely translated as "Mass Consumption Songs"), in which he attributed her success to her presence in all media outlets during an era of mass consumption, rather than to her talent. Published in 1965, it is worth remembering that Eco's judgment recalls how critics and older generations of the period reacted to the radically changed youth music and consumer culture of the period.

More recently, Maria Francesca Piredda argued that the singer's intermediality extended beyond the literal (in media) in her ability to address a variety of postwar audiences, an attempt to mediate conflicts between generations and social classes.<sup>4</sup> Deborah Toschi similarly explores Pavone's intermediality in terms of the star's performances; she notes that Pavone frequently impersonated stars in film and television and altered her vocals and attire for different performances, which exposed gender performativity and the "dichotomies of youth/maturity, Italian/American, and femininity/masculinity."<sup>5</sup> According to Toschi, Pavone's costumes and disguises ("travestimento") question definitions of femininity by constructing "un'idea mutante del personaggio" ("an idea of a mutable personality/character") in a way that parallels how teenagers mimic and experiment with subjectivities.<sup>6</sup> Pavone's impersonations and costuming are part of the star's intermedial and malleable persona, so it is significant that her *musicarelli* performances emphasize her character's fashion choices and acts of impersonation and disguise. Expanding upon Toschi's commentary on Pavone's cultural and transnational persona as malleable and fluid, my study views Pavone's performances specifically through a queer lens, by analyzing not only her on-screen representations of femininity, but also the ways in which her films disrupt traditional female narratives through adaptation and parody.

Because the *zanzara* films are musicals, it is important to note that Pavone's fictional character frequently references "yé-yé" culture (other young female singers of the '60s such as

<sup>3</sup> Enrica Capussotti, "Sceneries of Modernity: Youth Culture in 1950s Milan," 169-184. In *Italian Cityscapes: Culture and Urban Change in Contemporary Italy*, ed. Robert Lumley and John Foot (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2004), 180.

<sup>4</sup> Maria Francesca Piredda, "'Non è facile avere 18 anni.' Rita Pavone icona intermediale nell'industria culturale italiana degli anni Sessanta", 265-278. In *Tra due crisi: Urbanizzazione, mutamenti sociali e cultura di massa tra gli anni Trenta e gli anni Settanta*. Ed. Matteo Pasetti (Bologna: CLUEB, 2013), 274.

<sup>5</sup> "...alle dicotomie giovinezza/maturità, italianità/americana e femminilità/mascolinità." Deborah Toschi, "Maschere e vocalità di una ragazza yé-yé: Il caso di Rita Pavone", *Comunicazioni Sociali* 1, 2011. 83.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 82.

Caterina Caselli and Patty Pravo were also categorized as yé-yé singers), a term that offers insight into how Pavone represented new models of femininity and female empowerment. “Yé-yé” was a colloquial term used throughout Western Europe, particularly in Italy and France, to refer to popular music inspired by British beat culture and American rock’n’roll, its name based on a recurring vocal motif (similar to “doo-wop” music).<sup>7</sup> While both male and female singers participated in the spread of yé-yé culture, young women and teenage girls were the music style’s main demographic. Jonathyne Briggs argues that many young French female yé-yé singers represented the 1960s women’s sexual revolution, as evidenced by their lyrics and coquettish fashion and demeanor.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, Italian female stars labeled as “yé-yé” (Caselli, Pravo, and Pavone in particular) were considered symbols of female empowerment and sexual liberation.<sup>9</sup> In fact, Diego Giachetti’s book on Italian women’s sexual liberation dedicates a chapter to these singers; he explains that Pavone and Caterina Caselli in particular encouraged love without marriage and “the freedom to be able to choose the ‘man of gold,’” and that “to find him one needed to search for him in a multitude of experiences” or places.<sup>10</sup> Pavone’s participation in a music culture that addressed female empowerment to young listeners is one facet of her progressive representations of gender and girl/teenage identity, and while previous studies have emphasized Pavone’s status as an icon of the 1960s intermedial entertainment industry, I contend that Pavone’s performances reveal how changing notions of youth and gender identity represented another aspect of Italy’s postwar social and cultural modernization.

In addition to Pavone’s fashion and music styles, her expression of non-normative femininity and alternative models of female empowerment is emphasized by her films’ use of pastiche or hybrid narratives. Because Pavone’s films intentionally reference or parody other genres, the star’s representation of queered and hybrid identity (I use the term hybrid to refer to a blurring or breaking of conceived categories) also manifests within the films’ mise-en-scène and narrative conventions. As part of the growing interest in gender and genre studies, American and Italian film scholarship has sought to determine patterns of women’s representation and female spectatorship for different cinematic genres. Groupings of films with similar narrative patterns and female-targeted audiences have emerged as critics, academics, and popular media created labels such as the “woman’s film,” the “girly film,” and “chick flicks.” I argue that Pavone’s films, however, disrupt conventional categories of female narratives by altering generic conventions typically associated with female narratives, instead offering examples of alternative (and perhaps even queered) female perspectives in popular cinema.

### *A Hybrid, Unconventional Female Narrative*

Pavone’s films illustrate how female narratives of the Italian postwar period existed outside of the melodrama genre, and in guises not yet fully explored in film genre studies—in this case, in musical comedies. Musical films are hybrid in nature, often walking the line between comedy and melodrama, bringing together two forms of entertainment (music and visual narrative) to unite traditions of the stage with the screen, and referencing other genres; there is a reason Rick Altman

<sup>7</sup> Jonathyne Briggs, “Sex and the Girl’s Single: French Popular Music and the Long Sexual Revolution of the 1960s,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 21.3 (2012): 528.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> See Giachetti’s section on yé-yé girls for detailed examples of this phenomenon in Italy in *Nessuno Ci Può Giudicare: Gli Anni Della Rivolta Al Femminile* (Roma: DeriveApprodi, 2005), 22-32.

<sup>10</sup> “la libertà di poter scegliere l’uomo d’oro”, “per trovarlo bisognava cercarlo in una pluralità di esperienze”. This term, “l’uomo d’oro”, is a reference to Caselli’s song of the same name, which she also performed in the film *Nessuno mi può giudicare* (1966). Ibid., 28.

theorizes that two of the three categories of musicals are the “folk” and “fairy tale musical,” recalling historically set dramas and romantic dramedies, respectively.<sup>11</sup> But what happens to definitions of female narratives when a musical film challenges the notion of “gendered” genres with its hybridity and crossing of generic boundaries? Pavone’s films are exceptional objects of study in this inquiry because their empowering female narratives also challenge the conventions of female-targeted genres. Furthermore, while Italian Film Studies have provided excellent discussions on how women’s representation has changed over time, there has been far less attention to the role of female children or adolescents on-screen. The *zanzara* films are a useful resource for exploring how female narratives are created for different age groups, and how representations of girlhood can be used to symbolize notions of the self as mobile and in process.<sup>12</sup>

A “woman’s film” is defined as a film that addresses female spectators and their experiences. Regardless of this broad definition, the majority of scholars who study the “woman’s film” have focused exclusively on melodramas, especially when examining earlier cinema. Among these scholars are Maria LaPlace, Pam Cook, Mary Ann Doane, and Molly Haskell, to name a few.<sup>13</sup> Cook even suggests that the “woman’s film” is a “sub-category” of melodrama since the genre is particularly useful for understanding “how women are positioned under patriarchy so that we can formulate strategies for change.”<sup>14</sup> Despite the belief that melodramas offer exemplary female narratives, many of these studies recognize the oppressive nature of designating a production as a “woman’s film.” By labeling certain settings, mise-en-scènes, and tropes as specifically female, Cook argues that critics are acknowledging the importance of women’s representation while simultaneously marginalizing their audience according to sexual difference.<sup>15</sup> Haskell made a similar claim regarding marginalization almost two decades prior, arguing that labeling a “woman’s film” as such discourages critics from adequately examining the films and their differences, thus implying that women’s concerns are inconsequential.<sup>16</sup>

There seems to be an overall lack of scholarship on how female narratives of other genres (outside of melodramas and the “chick flick” or “rom-com” in contemporary cinema) fit within or alter previous definitions of the “woman’s film.”<sup>17</sup> As Doane rightly asserts, “The woman’s film is not a ‘pure’ genre...It is crossed and informed by a number of other genres or types—melodrama, film noir, the gothic or horror film—and finds its point of unification ultimately in the fact of its address,” the female spectator.<sup>18</sup> So why have so many studies, including Doane’s, limited their range of texts and genres? It is within this discourse that the *musicarello* offers new perspectives of the “woman’s film,” both in terms of genre studies and women’s representation in popular media.

<sup>11</sup> Rick Altman, *The American Film Musical* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

<sup>12</sup> Catherine Driscoll states that girl figures represent “an idea of mobility preceding the fixity of womanhood and implying an unfinished process of personal development.” *Girls: Feminine Adolescence in Popular Culture and Cultural Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 47.

<sup>13</sup> Maria LaPlace, “Producing and Consuming the Woman’s Film: Discursive Struggle in *Now Voyager*,” 138-166. In *Home is Where the Heart is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman’s Films*, ed. Christine Gledhill (London: British Film Institute, 1987), Pam Cook, “Melodrama and the Woman’s Picture,” 248-262. In *Imitations of Life: A Reader on Film & Television Melodrama*, ed. Marcia Landy (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), Mary Ann Doane, “The Woman’s Film: Possession and Address,” 283-298. In *Home is Where the Heart is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman’s Films*, ed. Christine Gledhill (London: British Film Institute, 1987), Molly Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies* (New York: Penguin, 1975).

<sup>14</sup> Cook, “Melodrama and the Woman’s Picture,” 248, 250.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 252.

<sup>16</sup> Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape*, 154-155.

<sup>17</sup> See Roberta Garrett’s *Postmodern Chick Flicks: The Return of the Woman’s Film* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

<sup>18</sup> Doane, “The Woman’s Film: Possession and Address,” 284.

The *musicarello* attends to both male and female protagonists, but, unlike many of Italy's postwar genres and cycles, it is perhaps the only collection of films from the 1940s-60s divided equally between male and female-centered narratives. Women were struggling for emancipation in Italy during the '60s, a time in which they actively sought agency and social equality. As part of this search for equality, new models of womanhood and/or femininity emerged for young women and adolescents, one such being the *musicarelli* stars, as young singers whose relatable age, fashion, and behavior contrasted with the previous exotic, full-bodied divas and maternal figures of the 1940s-50s melodramas.<sup>19</sup> Despite the fact that the *musicarello*'s attention to female points of view is unique from other postwar Italian film genres, feminist film critics have overlooked musicals in discussions on female narratives.

All the female-centered *musicarelli* employ features typical to the "woman's film," the term most famously detailed by LaPlace to describe narratives revolving around a female protagonist. The films center on tropes of female agency, such as "personal triumph over adversity," the "self-made woman," and the "cultivating [of] a new sense of self-worth and acquiring knowledge," all of which tie closely with the *musicarello*'s recurring narrative in which an ambitious star must overcome obstacles in their journey to success.<sup>20</sup> Other themes and conventions of the "woman's film" are a female point of view, narratives about relationships between women, and those depicting traditionally female experiences, such as domestic and romantic affairs.<sup>21</sup> Even contemporary "chick flicks," a genre Roberta Garrett discusses as a type of "woman's film," still follow the conventional trope of coupling in which a woman's ambition and happiness are ultimately "understood in relation to men."<sup>22</sup> However, the female-centered *musicarelli* departed from conventional women's films in their shift away from the domestic sphere and happy endings dependent on romantic coupling to instead focus on personal ambition, empowerment, and friendship.

Musical films naturally foster discourse on desire because of their hybridity and imaginative nature. Viewers are asked to suspend their desire for a realistic narrative and in exchange are given a form that actually expresses desire and inner conflict more authentically through music and emotionally powerful performances. Likewise, the "woman's film" is often discussed in terms of female desire and imagination, making female-centered musicals a valuable addition to current discussions on women's representation. Cook states that the "woman's film" is associated with daydreaming and fantasy, "locating women's desires in the imaginary, where they have always traditionally been placed."<sup>23</sup> Rather than positioning a (young) woman's desire as exclusive to domestic or romantic needs, as was typical of the 1940-50s Italian melodramas that centered on maternal duties and the importance of family, the *zanzara* films visualize female desire through female ambition and self-creation.<sup>24</sup>

Pavone's musical numbers are often embedded within daydreams, scenes of masquerade (impersonation, imitation, cross-dressing) and child-like "play" in a way that emphasizes gender and youth as subjectivities in flux. These sequences call upon tropes of the imagination and marginal spaces in which her character experiments with different performances of femininity and gendered

<sup>19</sup> Stephen Gundle details the difference of female beauty standards between the immediate postwar period and the '60s in his study on Italian actresses in *Bellissima: Feminine Beauty and the Idea of Italy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

<sup>20</sup> LaPlace, "Producing and Consuming the Woman's Film," 151-152.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>22</sup> Garrett comments on this phenomenon, explaining that while contemporary "chick flicks" still center on a woman's independence, "their independence and career aspirations are downgraded in favour of the pursuit of 'personal' happiness, understood in relation to men." *Postmodern Chick Flicks*, 94.

<sup>23</sup> Cook, "Melodrama and the Woman's Picture," 248.

<sup>24</sup> See Mary P. Wood's discussion on recurring themes in the postwar woman's film in "Gender Representations and Gender Politics" in *Italian Cinema* (Oxford: Berg, 2005).

behavior. Furthermore, they are accentuated by the musical's form, a genre that inherently calls attention to performance as a mode of self-expression.<sup>25</sup> The narrative tropes listed above visualize queer desire in a way that illustrates how identities are performative, fluid, and hybrid. The tropes' comedic and parodic potential are also characteristics associated with camp aesthetics because they shed light on the theatricality, artifice, and playfulness of experimenting with one's subjectivity in everyday life.<sup>26</sup> Susan Sontag explains that camp "proposes a comic vision of the world" because "the whole point of camp is to dethrone the serious and to be playful" in exposing how life and daily experiences are founded on artifice.<sup>27</sup> Given that the "woman's film" is frequently discussed in terms of female desire and imagination, and that musical films are noted for their imaginative nature, Pavone's *musicarelli* offer a valuable addition to discussions on women's representation in film.

*Rita la zanzara* (Rita the Mosquito, 1966) and *Non stuzzicate la zanzara* (Don't sting the Mosquito, 1967): *The Unruly Schoolgirl and the Post-Modern Fairy Tale*

Masquerades and daydreaming in *Rita la zanzara* visualize how performing and experimenting with different types of femininity is a natural process of self-realization for a young woman. The film's depiction of female stardom and fluctuating femininity also highlights the conflict between a (young) woman's desire for self-expression and the pressure to conform to societal standards of femininity. The majority of Pavone's impersonations and disguises comically display, and consequently challenge, traditional or excessive femininity (often by impersonating other female singers), and because these disguises and shifts in "identity" are always accompanied by musical performances, the film links acts of performance with notions of the self in process. In addition to acts of masquerade, Pavone's character in the film and its sequel resist conventional femininity through overt unruliness and tomboyish demeanor. As my analyses will show, the depiction of fluctuating and unstable femininity works alongside the films' adoption and alteration of narrative conventions normally associated with female-targeted genres (the schoolgirl comedy and the fairy tale). Analyzed in this perspective, I argue that the films offered alternative narratives of female empowerment for young female audiences seeking new models of social and cultural agency.

When discussing how Pavone's films broke away from typical female narratives, it is worth noting that Wertmüller was known for her "highly ambivalent and paradoxical representation of women and femininity in popular cinema."<sup>28</sup> It is possible that working with Pavone provided an apt vehicle through which the director could challenge normative representations of femininity. Wertmüller co-wrote and directed both screenplays under the name George H. Brown, an interesting decision since she did not use a pseudonym for her previous films or for her production of *Il giornalino di Gian Burrasca*. The reason for using a pseudonym is unclear, but it serves as a reminder that Wertmüller was the only female filmmaker who directed musical films at a time when male directors dominated both the Italian and American film musical production.

The protagonist, Rita (Pavone), oscillates between tomboyish and stereotypically feminine behavior. Her unruliness and gender role reversals actively break from conservative standards of femininity, but Rita also performs more normative versions of femininity while daydreaming and on

<sup>25</sup> See also Robynn J. Stilwell's text on diegetic music in cinema in "The Fantastical Gap Between Diegetic and Nondiegetic," 185-202. In *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema*, ed. Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer, and Richard Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 197.

<sup>26</sup> Susan Sontag, "Notes on Camp" in *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject*, 53- 65. Ed. Fabio Cleto (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 56, 63.

<sup>28</sup> Claudia Consolati, "Grotesque Bodies, Fragmented Selves: Lina Wertmüller's *Women in Love and Anarchy* (1973)," 33-52. In *Italian Women Filmmakers and the Gendered Screen*, ed. Cantini, Maristella (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 34.

stage. Judith/Jack Halberstam states that female masculinity is an essential, yet frequently overlooked, facet of gender identity. More specifically, Halberstam maintains that representations of “the tomboy, the masculine woman, and the radicalized masculine subject” are subversive because they question and undermine normative gender behavior and imagery.<sup>29</sup> While this discourse focuses primarily on the disruption of hegemonic masculinity, Todd W. Reeser explains that female masculinity affects processes of identification for both gendered identities.<sup>30</sup> He states that while non-male masculinity works to destabilize the “naturalness of the link between sex and gender, or between the male body and masculinity,” it may still offer empowering images for women seeking agency in traditionally male-dominated spheres.<sup>31</sup> Depictions of women gaining empowerment in the work force and public spheres were already present in Italian cinema prior to the *musicarello*, but the previous Italian female stars were recognized for their traditionally feminine and curvaceous physiques. Rather than abide by conventions defined by the star system, Pavone's fashion choices, gender role reversals, and her parody of excessive femininity display gender performance as self-expression.

In *Rita la zanzara*, both protagonists use disguises to alter their identities or personae while they perform on stage—a reminder that music is a particularly apt space for performing identities. Simon Frith explains that because popular music is an avenue for both self-expression and collectiveness, artists/fans can use music to express themselves and their identities in varying ways (he uses the terms the “mobile” self and the “self-in-process”).<sup>32</sup> The two characters, Rita and Paolo (Giancarlo Giannini), choose to perform as British beat singers, donning mod fashion and wigs that allow them to feel comfortable expressing alternate personalities outside of their everyday life. Wertmüller also worked with Giannini in many of her films, but the zanzara films appear to be the beginning of this affiliation. Paolo's character appears comically feminized against Rita's tomboyish, unruly, and brass personality, so it is possible that Wertmüller continued to work with the actor because, like Pavone, he was particularly adept at challenging normative gender behavior in his performances. When Rita is not performing at the venue, she daydreams of impersonating female stars recognizable for their stereotypically feminine physique. Rita's stage disguises and impersonations are forms of masquerade that emphasize youth and gender as performative, and it is an especially effective comedic trope because of its parodic potential. Robertson explains that masquerade (whether as opposite or same-sex impersonation) discloses “gendering as enactment and acting-out,” an act that encourages an understanding of gender impersonation as less of an imitation of gender and more of a parody of the notion itself; in other words, there is no “essential” gender identity that “exists prior to the image.”<sup>33</sup> Much like music expresses the mobile self, according to Frith, Rita's musical impersonations function alongside her cross-dressing and unruly tomboyish demeanor to illustrate how performance is a process of self-discovery.

The first film follows Rita Santangelo—an ironic name given her devilish behavior—who is in love with the timid and klutzy music professor, Paolo, at her female boarding school. The teenager is immediately introduced as a troublemaker in the opening sequence, in which Rita wanders the schoolyard singing “La zanzara,” a song in which she describes herself as a mosquito that annoys and torments others (Figure 1). This musical number shows Rita dumping sand on Paolo, whom she has mistaken for another professor. After Paolo reprimands her, Rita takes offense

<sup>29</sup> Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 41.

<sup>30</sup> Todd W. Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 214-215.

<sup>32</sup> Simon Firth, “Music and Identity,” 108-127. In *Questions of Cultural Identity*. Ed. Stuart Hall, Paul du Gay (London: Sage Publications Inc., 1996), 109-110.

<sup>33</sup> Pamela Robertson, “What Makes the Feminist Camp?” In *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject*, 266-281. Ed. Fabio Cleto (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 266-281.



and begins to shoot spitwads that sting him like a mosquito (matching with the lyrics). Most of the film focuses on Rita's antics and pranks on authority figures or school employees, an unruliness that was atypical for female postwar film characters, and even for the *musicarello* films. While many of the *musicarello*'s female protagonists disobey parents in order to pursue romance and personal ambitions, Rita seems to be unruly simply because it is a part of her sprightly personality.



Figure 1. Rita aiming a spitwad at Paolo during the opening music sequence.<sup>34</sup>

Kathleen Rowe Karlyn's discussion of the "unruly girl" focuses on the mother-daughter relationship, but while Rita's mother is absent in *La zanzara*, she is not "demonized, or forced to disappear," as Karlyn describes. In the second film, Rita and her mother establish a supportive relationship in which they encourage each other's freedom from patriarchal control. According to Karlyn, the "unruly girl" rebels against parental and societal constraints and regulations, similar to the unruly woman's demonstration of "female unruliness as a cluster of attributes that challenge patriarchal power by defying norms of femininity intended to keep a woman in her place."<sup>35</sup> Karlyn demonstrates how unruliness is a common characteristic for women seeking agency in a repressive environment, regardless of age. This shared desire is particularly useful in understanding how Pavone's films, while focusing on a girl/young woman, project narratives of female desire and empowerment that can address all age groups. While Rita's schoolgirl pranks may not initially appear to challenge patriarchal structures or traditional constructs of femininity, they represent a form of freedom that was accessible to teenagers in an institutional setting. Rita upsets traditional power structures and gender dynamics because she gains agency and a sense of freedom by taking power away from authoritative male figures.

<sup>34</sup> This and other images published in this article are screenshots of an original work of authorship protected by copyright. These screenshots are reproduced in *gendersexualityitaly* in observance of Italian and American copyright laws, as the images are used only for "educational purposes" and neither the publication of these screenshots nor *gendersexualityitaly* is intended for commercial use.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

Rita and her peers make spectacles out of their school's male workers through the film, often by divesting them of control of their bodies. For example, they sew Paolo's sleeves shut and glue him to his piano stool, leading to a hysterical scene in which the students and administrators circle and embarrass Paolo by pulling him off the chair and ripping the seat of his pants. In addition to reversing the power dynamics of the student-teacher relationship, the girls reverse the male gaze by making their professor an object of entertainment. Rita, curious about Paolo, sneaks into his room to search his personal belongings and later spies on him. Her snooping is especially transgressive because she discovers Paolo's wig along with a photo of him dressed in his stage outfit, exposing a part of his persona that he has deliberately kept hidden in his workplace. In order to follow Paolo afterhours, Rita and her peers ambush one of the male attendants by beating him, tying him in a burlap bag, and forcing him to give Rita his clothes so that she can sneak out of the school disguised as a boy. Rita's behavior in these snooping and escape sequences reverses the male gaze as well as the authoritative power of learning institutions, and the scenes highlight female friendship because of her collaboration and entertainment with peers.

Similar to Italian schoolgirl comedies of the fascist era, Rita's and her classmates' "untraditional behavior" of rebellion and inventiveness resists a "commodification of the female body" by shifting spectacularization onto the male body.<sup>36</sup> Maggie Günsberg explains that 1960s Italian comedies responded to the changing social and consumerist attitudes of the economic boom by commodifying women's bodies through their sexuality, while male bodies were commodified by their labor or financial power.<sup>37</sup> Paolo and Rita are both performers, but *Rita la zanzara* instead emphasizes male spectacle through comedic scenes in which Paolo lacks authoritative power in his place of employment. The film's redistribution of power dynamics between male and female characters recalls the emerging feminist movement in Italy during the 1960s by illustrating how girls could find modes of empowerment and agency within institutional structures.

While the students resist being sexualized through their unruliness and reversal of the male gaze and power dynamics, Rita's masquerades (her imitation of female stars and cross-dressing) challenge normative femininity more directly, through mimesis and parody. Rita's imitation of stereotypically feminine demeanor and physique contrasts with her character's personality and behavior around peers. The tension between normative femininity and Rita's own fluctuating femininity recalls a common struggle for many women—the inner conflict that exists between a woman's subjectivity and what she believes she should desire according to societal norms. More recently, contemporary female comedians such as Amy Schumer and Rachel Bloom have demonstrated that music is a powerful medium for this specific discourse. Bloom's TV series, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, satirizes current discussions about feminism and female desire by using a musical format; the main character (played by Bloom) at one point proclaims that she often "imagines" her "life is as a series of musical numbers" because it offers her an easier way to express her feelings.<sup>38</sup> As I will detail below, Rita's impersonations are all directly tied to musical performance, and many reflect the tension between society's standards of femininity and Rita's own preferred gendered behavior.

When Rita dresses as a boy so she can sneak out of her dormitory and spy on Paolo, her cross-dressing appears effortless and natural since her short hair and thin, childlike physique were

<sup>36</sup> Jacqueline Reich, "Reading, Writing, and Rebellion: Collectivity, Specularity, and Sexuality in the Italian Schoolgirl Comedy, 1934-43," 220-252. In *Mothers of Invention: Women, Italian Fascism, and Culture*, ed. Robin Pickering-Iazzi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 221.

<sup>37</sup> Maggie Günsberg, *Italian Cinema: Gender and Genre* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 91.

<sup>38</sup> *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*. "Josh Has No Idea Where I Am!" Episode 15, Season 1. Directed by Steven Tsuchida. Written by Rachel Bloom & Aline Brosh McKenna. The CW, March, 21, 2016.

already iconic features of her public persona. She practices her impression of a teenage boy with friends by smoking a cigarette, truncating and slurring her speech, strutting with a hunch and wide-stance, and slapping her classmates on the rear. Rita follows Paolo to a nightclub, where, disguised in his long wig, he performs with an English band. Seeing Paolo's attire prompts Rita to escape to the dressing room and change into a long blonde wig and a Mod sheath dress—both Paolo and Rita have now transformed themselves into yé-yé singers. Rita performs a yé-yé song on stage, after which Paolo is immediately infatuated with her, who, much like a modern day Cinderella, is a mysterious woman that disappears before he can introduce himself. At this point, both Paolo and Rita have a “double” constructed specifically for stage performances, a narrative and cinematic trope that is often analyzed in terms of fragmented or plural identities. Furthermore, these disguises reflect the large influence of overseas culture on youth entertainment during the late '50s and '60s and how music cultures create spaces for youth self-expression.

After this encounter, the remainder of the narrative stresses Rita's concern that Paolo is only in love with her more stereotypically feminine yé-yé persona. She daydreams about imitating stars famous for their physicality—those who showcased their curvy physique, often through seductive and elegant mannerisms—assuming Paolo would prefer this form of femininity. She first sings “I Wanna Be Loved By You,” impersonating Marilyn Monroe in Billy Wilder's *Some Like it Hot* (1959) by wearing a similar sparkling form-fitted dress while lying on luxurious bedding (Figure 2). As she stands, the musical sequence cuts to a medium close-up to focus on the movement of her lips, head, and shoulders, paralleling Monroe's body language and framing in Wilder's film. The camera cuts to an unnerving close-up of Paolo staring at Rita and smirking from within the audience, one half of his face covered in shadow, the other lit by the room's red lighting. It is difficult to initially identify Paolo as the viewer because of the red lighting, which paints an ominous image of the male gaze in process. In another daydream, Rita wears a simple black gown and performs Mina's “E se domani” (1964). She walks into a mostly empty room in which Paolo is playing a piano topped with candelabra, a setting and attire evocative of Mina's elegant and minimal style. As Rita sings, she overly gesticulates in a manner similar to Mina's trademark performance style. Instead of framing Rita as the object the audience's gaze, Rita and Paolo are alone in a room, intently looking at each other from opposite sides of the piano. Gannini's hair, while not naturally red, has a red tint for both *zanzura* films, as if coordinated with Rita's own short red hair, and the shot's framing gives the appearance that the two are mirroring each other's gestures and attire. The last daydream sequence occurs after Rita catches Paolo looking at images of the Rio Carnival, a festival in Rio de Janeiro featuring parades and masquerade balls. Rita daydreams about singing South American singer Carmen Miranda's “Chica Chica Boom,” as originally performed in Irving Cumming's musical film *That Night in Rio* (1941). Like her Monroe impersonation, Rita imitates Miranda's samba dancing while wearing a glittering form-fitted gown (now in gold) that accentuates her small waist and creates the illusion of larger hips. Male backup dancers surround Rita, and the scene cuts to another unsettling visualization of the male voyeur; a close-up of Paolo's face in the crowd is cast with an eerie green light as he smiles and whispers “divina, divina” (divine).

The framing of the Monroe and Miranda sequences imitates scenes from American musical films. The two musical numbers focus on large audiences that surround and gaze at shapely women, perhaps a reference to the early Hollywood star system as a product of the male gaze. Rita's imitation of Mina is far more emotional and intimate, and it is the only sequence to depict Paolo as a companion rather than as a voyeur. It is worth noting that while Mina's fashion, voice, and gestures were deemed traditionally feminine, her characters in *musicarelli* (namely, *Urlatori alla sbarra* [1960] and *Io bacio...tu baci* [1961]) were unruly in their own ways. Rachel Haworth details the trajectory of

Mina's star image from the late '50s onward, noting that up until the late '60s the singer's screen persona represented respectability and domesticity for female viewers



Figure 2. Rita impersonating Marilyn Monroe.

while still conforming to the male gaze.<sup>39</sup> Despite Mina's traditional femininity and elegance, her *musicarelli* supported female emancipation (freedom to work and sexual liberation) by resisting parental authority and enjoying independence outside of the home. Though the two stars adopted vastly different images of femininity, the female musicians of the *musicarello* embedded images of female agency in a male-dominated entertainment industry.<sup>40</sup>

Rita's daydreams underscore stereotypically feminine physiques and elegance, but it is not until she mimics Charlie Chaplin's clothing, mustache, and mannerisms in real life (not in a daydream) that she truly seems to be herself around her friends. Rita's masquerades and disguises are a visualization of the self in process by demonstrating how experimenting with identity and gender performance (even if only in one's imagination) is a common process for self-understanding. Her impersonations of female artists occur in a metadiagetic and marginal space (daydream sequences that are not necessary to the linear narrative) within which her character expresses interiority or subjectivity. Fantasy and imagination are common components of musicals, and Rita's performance sequences demonstrate how musicals can be an apt space for expressing female desire.

While in the first film Rita's unruliness and masquerades disrupt normative femininity and circumvent an institution of patriarchy, in the sequel, *Non stuzzicate la zanzara*, her character uses her unruliness to express and share her empowerment with her mother, who is constrained by Rita's strict father. Rita's tomboyish behavior is accentuated in the sequel through comedic gender role

<sup>39</sup> Rachel Haworth, "Making a Star on the Small Screen: The Case of Mina and RAI", *Journal of Italian Cinema & Media Studies* 3: 1+2 (2015): 33-34.

<sup>40</sup> Morgan Blue's discussion explains that girls in particular use on-screen music performance as a means of overcoming and critiquing masculine culture and institutions, such as the music industry, because it offers them a new form of "voice". "Performing Pop Girlhood on the Disney Channel," 171-190. In *Voicing Girlhood in Popular Music: Performance, Authority, Authenticity*, ed. Allison Adrian, Jacqueline Warwick (New York: Routledge, 2016), 177, 180.

reversals that effeminize Paolo and characterize him as inept (which will be evident in the scenes analyzed below).<sup>41</sup> The film begins shortly after the events of the first film, which concluded with Rita successfully performing Paolo's song in a music competition. The couple now collaborates in the music industry, Paolo writing music and Rita performing his compositions. The sequel leaves behind the boarding school and follows Rita's stay with her parents (Romolo Valli and Giulietta Masina) and strict aunts, who reside in a Swiss military fortress. The setting and narrative is reminiscent of a traditional fairy tale in which a daughter seeks freedom from a controlling guardian or witch. In many famous tales, the cruel and governing adult is a woman (Snow White, Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, etc.), but, in a reversal of gender roles, Rita and her mother help each other to escape from the father's constraints. An additional reversal in the film is the parody of a savior prince or knight, not only to emphasize Paolo's ineptitude but to highlight Rita's and her mother's support for each other.

The altering of fairy tale tropes in the *musicarello* is an astute choice. Scholars have pointed out that contemporary fairy tales are also hybrid by nature. For example, Cristina Bacchilega posits that fairy tales are a "borderline" or "transitional" genre because of the way the tales change over time with different authors and mediums.<sup>42</sup> She explains that the malleability of fairy tales often inspires authors to alter well-known stories for their own purpose because they are "pliable to political, erotic, or narrative manipulation."<sup>43</sup> By altering fairy tale tropes to deconstruct or challenge values associated with the tale's traditional narrative, contemporary texts create a postmodern fairy tale. Cathy Lynn Preston discusses postmodern fairy tales in terms of blurred genres, narratives, and gender representation; even if the tales do not always challenge gender constructs, she states, the genre's imaginative nature and blurring of authenticity and reality/fiction create a liminal space that sheds light on the story's artifice.<sup>44</sup> According to Preston, one can, to varying degrees, find elements of postmodern fairy tales in a multitude of texts, and contemporary usage of fairy tale imagery "exists in fragments (princess, frog, slipper, commodity relations in a marriage market) in the nebulous realm that we might most simply identify as cultural knowledge."<sup>45</sup> In other words, plots, imagery, and tropes of classic fairy tales are pervasive in contemporary culture because they have become common knowledge. Preston and Bacchilega analyze contemporary fairy tales with an emphasis on women's representation since, "for girls and women, in particular, the fairy tale's magic has assumed the contradictory form of being both a spiritual enclave supported by old wives' wisdom and an exquisitely glittery feminine kingdom."<sup>46</sup> An understanding of how contemporary, postmodern fairy tales are frequently created for social and gender commentary is especially relevant to musical films since, like the fairy tale, musicals are a form that calls attention to artifice (an emphasis on performance) and hybridity (the mixing of genre conventions) while still feeling authentic through relatable characters and themes.

*Non stuzzicate* can be considered a postmodern fairy tale because its gender role reversals and parody of the knight-as-hero trope represent the fight for (young) women's emancipation in a patriarchal society. The film opens with Paolo and Rita spending time in the countryside and discussing their future—she expresses her desire to keep traveling the world together even though

<sup>41</sup> See Jacqueline Reich's introduction chapter on the *inetto* in *Beyond the Latin Lover: Marcello Mastroianni, Masculinity, and Italian Cinema* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004), xi-xvi.

<sup>42</sup> Cristina Bacchilega, *Postmodern Fairy Tales: Gender and Narrative Strategies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 4.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Cathy Lynn Preston, "Disrupting the Boundaries of Genre and Gender: Postmodernism and the Fairy Tale," 197-212. In *Fairy Tales and Feminism: New Approaches*. Ed. Donald Haase (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), 206, 211.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 210.

<sup>46</sup> Bacchilega, *Postmodern Fairy Tales*, 5.



Paolo wants to marry. As a continuation of the previous film, which concluded with a kiss and the protagonists' coupling, *Non stuzzicate* offers an alternate vision of what follows a "happy ending" by suggesting that a fulfilling life does not require marriage. Paolo contacts Rita's father without her knowledge, angering Rita, who is consequently forced to return home. The bulk of the narrative focuses on Rita's interactions with her parents, while Paolo, in his own set of narrative events, follows her to the castle under the ruse of a Swiss soldier in training. Paolo then, dressed in white pajamas and a cape from his guard costume, sneaks into Rita's quarters by climbing over a locked gate and up the growing vines on her balcony, a scene and attire evocative of a savior knight or prince. He asks for forgiveness, but Rita shuts the window in his face leaving him to beg behind closed blinds. He later hides in a suit of armor to apologize again to Rita, but she simply teases and laughs at him (Figure 3). She recalls watching him earlier during his training with the guards, telling him his failed attempts on the field amuse her. These interactions mock and highlight the absurdity of the stereotypical hero's actions in fairy tales and the notion that female characters depend on a male suitor.



Figure 3. Rita amused by Paolo hiding in a suit of armor.

Instead of being saved by Paolo, Rita chooses to remain in the castle because her mother is lonely and bored living under her husband's old-fashioned rules. Rita's father and his sisters frequently chastise Maria Cristina (Masina) for her childlike behavior—such as playing with birds and eating loudly at the dinner table—which is the reason why her husband sent Rita to a boarding school in the first place, believing that Maria Cristina was incapable of educating her daughter properly. Rita and her mother replace the role of the male savior in fairy tales by helping each other express their individuality and gain freedom from male authority. While roaming the castle, Rita discovers her mother in a secret room painted entirely in purple and white stripes, a place Maria Cristina created for herself so that she could be free from her husband's constraints. Rita catches her mother smoking and reading a popular book series while surrounded by birds. Her mother expresses that she wishes she could have more fun, and she asks Rita teach her how to dance to "modern music" ("la musica di oggi"). Rita instructs her mother to dance like yé-yé singers to the song "Fare lo shake" ("Do the Shake"), and the two change into outfits that match the striped walls, infusing the musical number with a dream-like aura. By the end of the film, Rita's free spirit and confidence

motivates Maria Cristina to stand up for herself by expressing her feelings to her husband. She explains that she feels suffocated, calls him “ridicolo e noioso” (ridiculous and boring), and proudly shows him her new dance moves.

Just as Rita frees her mother from her father’s rules, Maria Cristina’s new sense of empowerment prompts her to help her daughter in a time of need. After finally reconciling, Rita and Paolo escape from the castle to sing at a nightclub and plan their performance at a musical festival, but her father punishes her by locking her in a tower. He sends her to a “prigione” (prison) with only “pane duro” (old bread), a scene reminiscent of fairy tale maidens locked in castle towers. Rita remains confident as usual and tells her father he will soon realize his mistake. The following morning, Rita leaves out the window and sneaks past the guards with a comical escape plan that covers the young men in tar and feathers. Rita’s escape is of her own design and is a reversal of the fairy tale trope in which a male hero ascends a tower to save a damsel. Maria Cristina then travels to an alpine village to see Rita perform at the music festival, only to find her daughter missing and kidnapped by her husband. Maria Cristina stalls for Rita by taking her place on stage and scats and dances to a ragtime song. Wertmüller’s casting of Masina is significant since prior to this film she was cast in her husband’s films (Federico Fellini), who has been noted for using female figures as objects of spectacle. Masina was featured as “a life force that happened to inhabit the body of a woman” rather than as “a real woman,” whose characters “experience[d] an array of hallucinations straight from the lending library of Fellini’s imagination.”<sup>47</sup> For example, in *Giulietta degli spiriti* (1965) Teresa De Laurentis argued that Masina’s semi-autobiographical character “lacks a positive self-image” because she resided in a fictional world controlled by her husband’s imagination.<sup>48</sup> However, these readings do not take into account how Masina may have embedded her own sense of female agency into representations of a woman tied to a man’s world, a female rebellion and unruliness tied to the act of performing that is more explicit in Wertmüller’s film. Maria Cristina not only saves her daughter by preventing her from losing her spot on stage, which leads Rita to join a record label, but she also takes control of her life—symbolized by her stage performance.

The role reversals in this sequel manipulate common fairy tale tropes and imagery, especially the roles of the male hero, the distressed female, and the evil female guardian. *Non stuzzicate* challenges classic fairy tales, which “by showcasing ‘women’ and making them disappear at the same time...transforms us/them into man-made constructs of ‘Woman.’”<sup>49</sup> As Preston and Bacchilega have observed, there is a subversive potential to contemporary fairy tales that relies upon the genre’s hybridity, and *Non stuzzicate* does exactly this, as both a musical film and a postmodern fairy tale.

### *Conclusion: The Post/Neo-Feminist Girl*

Pavone’s unconventional performances of femininity in the *zanzara* films are unique to 1960s Italian cinema, even amongst the *musicarello* films. Although some female protagonists like Caterina Caselli and Mina challenged normative female behavior and roles in both private (domestic) and public (nightclubs and in the workplace) spaces, Pavone is the only *musicarello* star to openly cross-dress and be famous for her tomboyish attire and demeanor. Despite Pavone’s (and her character’s) frequent resistance to gendered stereotypes, the *zanzara* films’ heteronormative conclusions and Rita’s masquerades of excessive femininity are a reminder that gendered behavior and subjectivity are not always singular or static. Using Pavone as an especially apt case study, my positioning of *musicarelli*

<sup>47</sup> Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape*, 311-312.

<sup>48</sup> Teresa De Laurentis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), 102.

<sup>49</sup> Bacchilega, *Postmodern Fairy Tales*, 9.

within discourses on the “woman’s film” has shown how the comedic musical form can offer empowering female perspectives outside of melodrama, and how hybrid and imaginative cinematic forms open more space for non-normative gender representation.

The *zanzara* films are a valuable resource for analyzing popular representations of girls and young women, a topic that has not yet been sufficiently explored in Italian screen studies. Pavone’s characters are examples of how an unruly young woman symbolizes struggles relatable to women of all ages, and how the young female singers of the ‘60s modeled a form of femininity and female empowerment more relatable to its audiences than did the female stars of the 1940s-‘50s.<sup>50</sup> Current scholarship on representations of girlhood is often framed within discussions of postfeminism and reactions to third-wave feminism. However, Hilary Radner contends that the central characteristics of postfeminism—narratives revolving around a working, ambitious woman that highlight fashion and consumer culture—first emerged in the 1960s, leading her to rename the movement as “neo-feminism.”<sup>51</sup> The *musicarello* is indeed a product and representation of how youth gained status and agency through consumer and cultural choices during the ‘60s (choosing specific fashion and entertainment). In Pavone’s films, girlhood is a representation of a culture in which bodies and consumer power are avenues for female empowerment. Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra describe the “postfeminist heroine as vital, youthful, and playful,” the reason for which youth is an important characteristic for the protagonist; however, depictions of girlhood extend beyond age by depicting “fantasies of regeneration and transformation that also speak to the desire for change.”<sup>52</sup> Pavone’s performances reflect how young female *musicarelli* singers encouraged female empowerment through consumer choices by using fashion and music for self-expression.

So how might these films add to discussions of the postwar “woman’s film”? I would argue that Pavone’s performances and her hybrid films prefigure current studies that have focused primarily on contemporary films (the 1990s and on), revealing how 1960s Italian youth media was not far behind today’s female narratives like the “chick flick.” As Garrett argues, “The most persistent feature of the new women’s cycles is their self-conscious knowing tone and obsessive interest in past forms, genres and the prior gender roles carried with them.”<sup>53</sup> John Stephens attributes a similar characteristic to the “teen film,” which is often self-reflexive and fluid in terms of genre.<sup>54</sup> While youth-targeted media and child/adolescent figures have gained insufficient attention in Italian screen studies, there is an evident link between hybrid genres and youth narratives and their representation of transition, self-expression, and the self in process. It is perhaps this that made the *musicarello* an especially effective space of representation for young women seeking empowerment in the 1960s.

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<sup>51</sup> Hilary Radner, *Neo-Feminist Cinema: Girly Films, Chick Flicks and Consumer Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 3-4.

<sup>52</sup> Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra, *Interrogating Postfeminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 9, 22.

<sup>53</sup> Garrett, *Postmodern Chick Flicks*, 14.

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