

*The journal Cinemasessanta, edited by Mino Argentieri, published an interview with Elio Petri by Umberto Rossi in issue 144 (March-April 1982) under the title: "You Reproach Us, But You Have Never Defended Us"*

**With the help of the theater of Genoa, you've made your debut as a stage director with *The American Clock* by Arthur Miller. Why this choice after so many years dedicated exclusively to film?**

In my most recent films, beginning with "La proprietà non è più un furto", there's a certain urge toward the theater. For example, the critics criticized my use of monologues in "La proprietà non è più un furto". But even now I still defend that choice, even if it's inscribed in a theatrical perspective. In the same vein, *Todo Modo* represents a kind of political and theatrical "mystery". The film faithfully respects what is at the base of a theatrical performance --a certain concept of space and time, a certain use of actors. I also believe we're at a time in the development of creative work when a director's experience is going to be circular, interdisciplinary in the greatest sense. Take Luca Ronconi's case for example. He works in theater and television and sooner or later will make a film as well. I really think it's worthwhile to mix diverse experiences, and that a film director, for example, should share what he knows with theater actors and teach them "immediacy", making a return to building the performance "with their own hands" rather than reverting to intellectually contrived formulas.

**And as for television?**

Television lets you broadcast an event live to millions of people. Unfortunately that capability is only marginally employed, since many prefer to build an "event" from the most routine, most proven methods. Television shouldn't be an excuse to make pseudo-films, nor pseudo-comedies, nor pseudo-sports events. That's why I find theater more interesting than television. I even think working in theater these days requires lots of ideas, many more than are expected of a film director.

**Was your experience televising Sartre's *Dirty Hands* also "pseudo"?**

Not at all, if you consider it closely, you will find I didn't try to make pseudo-film or pseudo-theater but something truly and intrinsically televisual. To do that, I took screen size into account for every scene and worked intensely with opening shots and precision handling of the video camera. You had asked me why I chose Miller. I chose the play because it's a contemporary work. I'm not taken with classics already revered in cultural history and the annals of the stage. *The American Clock* is a play we should have written in Italy, a work of great newsworthiness. Staging it was like making a film.