

Cinematic landscapes in Antonioni's *L'Avventura*

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The introduction of landscape in film instead of constructed décor allowed radical changes of perception of space in film. In fact, space in film ceases to be conceived as pictorial, theatrical and symbolic, and starts to be explored in all its dimensions. The projected image acquires texture, vividness and depth. Antonioni's *L'Avventura* (1960) marks a breakthrough in the use of landscape in film. The landscape grounds the image in a space-time dimension inscribing the scene in a complex experiential mode while introducing enigmatic protagonists (elements of the landscape) into the image. The film thus establishes a dialectical relation between body and landscape, where both become parallel agents in the construction of the emotional drama. This cinematic construction of 'being in the landscape' makes the film distinctive both in its visual and narrative form. The objective of this article is to analyze a particular site of the film, the scenes shot on Lisca Bianca Island, and explore how the notion of 'being in the landscape' conditions and determines the film's narrative structure. The processes of incorporation of the characters in the landscape become a primary element in Antonioni's visual language, serving narrative, dramatic, and thematic functions.

Keywords: film geography; simulacrum; representation; enacted landscape

Some filmmakers decide to tell a story and then choose the décor which suits it best. With me, it works the other way around: there's some landscape, some place where I want to shoot, and out of that I develop the themes of my films. (Michelangelo Antonioni cited in Tomasulo 1993, p. 4)

Introduction

In the first 10 years of cinema, most films were 'actuality' films showcasing the scenic wonders of the landscape (Cahn 1996). When American audiences first went to the movies in 1896, they saw monumental subjects such as the Niagara Falls. Early films of the falls, such as the Lumière

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Niagara, Horseshoe Falls (1896), captured the majestic power of the landscape.¹ The early shots of waterfalls, canyons, and mountains were the popular fare. In most of them, landscape was not merely a background for action, but was the film's primary subject. However, the appeal of the landscape actuality film was short-lived, overshadowed by the appeal of the story film in the early 1900s.

By 1908, cinema shifted from a representational medium to a simulacral medium, in which the representational medium expresses a normative belief that film has a one-to-one ontological relationship with the objects it is depicting. As Clarke and Doel (2007) show, early cinema was evaluated on how well it maintained this relationship. Baudrillard's book entitled *Simulacra and Simulation* (1995) describes how narrative film breaks this one-to-one relationship and creates its own 'reality-effect' (Doel and Clarke 2007). Hence, cinema seemed to be diverted from a preoccupation with the natural attraction of the landscape to a fascination with the story, which often took place within an enclosed theatrical-like décor.

During the silent film era, the great Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein was the first to develop strategies for using the landscape as more than a re-presentation of actual events or locations. In his book entitled *Non-Indifferent Nature*, Eisenstein notes, "landscape is the freest element of film, the least burdened with servile, narrative tasks, and the most flexible in conveying moods, emotional states, and spiritual experiences" (Eisenstein 1987, p. 217). Despite Eisenstein's early efforts, it was not until many decades later that the Italian cinema of Rossellini and Antonioni fully exploited the potentials of the landscape in film.

Antonioni's film *L'Avventura* (1960) is bound up with shots of places and visual ideas that succinctly encapsulate the psychology of the characters. The director's use of place is clearly central to the plot. In *The Fate of Place*, Edward Casey says:

Whatever is true for space and time, this much is true for place: we are immersed in it and could not do without it. To be at all – to exist in any way – is to be somewhere, and to be somewhere is to be in some kind of place. Place is as requisite as the air we breathe, the ground on which we stand, the bodies we have. We are surrounded by places. We walk over and through them. We live in places, relate to others in them, die in them. Nothing we do is unplaced. (1998, p. ix)

The objective of the present article is to re-evaluate the significance of place and the 'body in the landscape' with respect to the story line and show how the film's narrative in Antonioni's *L'Avventura* emerges from the insular landscape of Lisca Bianca Island, where the first part of the film was shot (Figures 1 and 2). Previous critiques of this film have mainly focused on the interpretation of existential themes such as alienation and the impermanence of relationships (Tomasulo 1993; Darke 1995). Nowell-Smith (1997) has argued that Antonioni's work seems indifferent to either

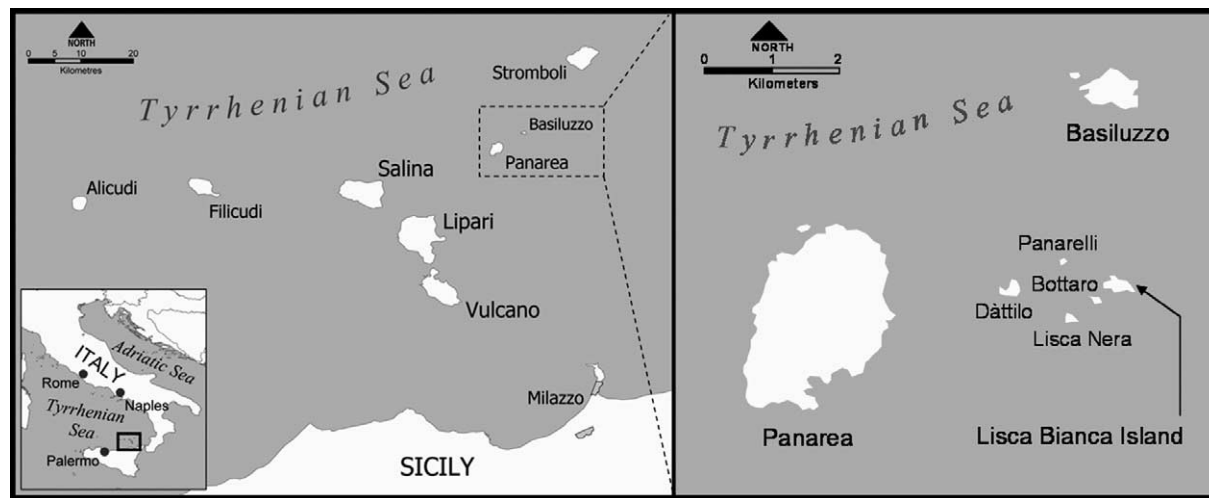


Figure 1. Aeolian Islands. The left map locates the Aeolian Islands in Italy and the right map shows Lisca Bianca Island in relation to the other larger Aeolian Islands.



Figure 2. The landscape of the Aeolian Islands in the Mediterranean sea. Source: Courtesy of the Criterion Collection. *L'Avventura*, 1960. Film. Directed by Michelangelo Antonioni.

progress or decadence and creates a new grammar in narrative cinema through the use of unstable narrative logic. However, none of these reviews discuss the fundamental role of the landscape with respect to the story. This paper goes beyond Nowell-Smith's and other authors' critiques by not only suggesting the enactment of the landscape itself but also exploring how the processes of incorporation of the characters in the landscape ('being in the landscape') condition and determine the film's narrative structure.

The meaning of 'being in the landscape'

The hapticality of cinema as it relates to 'being in the landscape' is about an emotive characteristic that is capitalized on in narrative cinema and allows the audience and characters in the film to be drawn into the being of the landscape. Film geographers argue that it is this sensorial immediacy – this haptical quality – that detaches it from the order of re-presentation of an original (Clarke 1997; Aitken and Dixon 2006). For Walter Benjamin, cinema constituted a form that operated in a manner that was "primarily tactile, being based on changes of place and focus which periodically assail the spectator" (Benjamin 1969, p. 238). Hence, cinema engages in a haptical rather than simply optical mode of perception, "Sight discovers in itself a function of touching which is independent of its optical function" (Deleuze 1981, p. 99). In fact, film theory has shifted away from its focus on sight towards constructing a theory of site. 'Site-seeing' is a 'passage' out of the theory of the gaze. Hapticality of cinema enables the viewer and characters to "actively and

unceasingly negotiate filmic space with the totality of their senses" (Poppe 2009, p. 54). Many aspects of the moving image – for example, the acts of inhabiting and traversing space – could not be explained within the framework of theories of the eye. As a result, cinema becomes a matter of touch and bodily use, and its spatial perimeter "always stretches by way of *incorporation*" (Bruno 1997, p. 21; my italics). The visual apparatus that Giuliana Bruno describes here is similar to Ingold's ontology of landscape which will be discussed further (Ingold 1993, p. 157).

Current thinking on geographic research on film clearly positions cinema as simulacral rather than representational (Clarke 1997; Cresswell and Dixon 2002; Doel and Clarke 2007). Hence, the cinematic space is not a representational space, it is a space in itself. What is seen on-screen and what is known to exist off-screen, i.e. the reel and the real, become drastically different. In addition, as David Clarke and Marcus Doel argue:

Through the introduction of continuity editing techniques [which emphasize smooth transition of time and space] in the late 1890s and early 1900s – reaction shots, point-of-view shots, parallel action, etc. – filmmakers slowly became able to re-engineer space and time, bringing an experience of other times and spaces, both real and imagined, to the audience. (2005, p. 43)

This is how the new narrative filmmaking techniques have been deployed to allow film to shift from a representational to a simulacral medium. Thus, through montage of precisely-cut components taken out of their original contexts, film does not represent a world that pre-existed it. Film works as a simulacral medium integrating the body and the landscape. Here, the body includes the body of the characters and the body of the viewer (where hapticality is working). Through these editing techniques, projection and identification processes incorporate the body of the viewer, the characters, and the landscape. Thus, narrative cinema works to imbricate or enfold the body and the landscape together.

What is the nature of the relationship between the body and the landscape? Before delving into the dialectic of 'being in the landscape,' what do we mean by landscape? As Tim Ingold (1993, p. 153) argues, "the landscape is not land, it is not nature, and it is not space." First, one can ask of a landscape what it is like, but not how much of it there is. Hence, where land is quantitative and homogeneous, landscape is qualitative and heterogeneous. Second, landscape is not a picture in the imagination, surveyed by the mind's eye; nor is it an alien or formless substrate awaiting the imposition of human order. Third, whereas actual journeys are made through a landscape, the map on which all potential journeys may be plotted is equivalent to space.

'Being in the landscape' implies body and landscape concepts, which emphasize *form* rather than function. As a result, there is an intimate relationship between character ('figure') and setting ('ground'). Foreground is closely tied to background. Ingold argues that body and

landscape are complementary terms, each implying the other, where both function as figure and ground. The forms of the landscape are not prepared in advance for the body to occupy, nor are the bodily forms specified independently of the landscape. As Ingold explains, “Both sets of forms are generated and sustained in and through the processual unfolding of a total *field of relations* that cuts across the emergent interface between organism and environment” (1993, p. 156). Ingold’s ontology of landscape is described as a “movement of *incorporation* rather than inscription, not a transcribing of form onto material but a movement wherein the forms themselves are generated” (1993, p. 157). Thus, through living in it, the landscape becomes a part of us, just as we are a part of it. Hence, the landscape tells – or rather is – our story.

The degree of ‘being in the landscape’

Antonioni’s film *L’Avventura* is the story of a young woman who disappears mysteriously on a yachting trip with her friends to an island on the north-east coast of Sicily. Initially, Anna (Lea Massari) and her fiancé Sandro (Gabriele Ferzetti) go for a swim in the Tyrrhenian Sea and then the entire group proceeds ashore to investigate a volcanic island. The island’s landscape is unusual with impressive monoliths thrusting out of the sea. Anna is increasingly upset with her relationship with Sandro. A storm rises and the group prepares to leave the island, but Anna is nowhere to be found. In the ensuing search, Sandro becomes attracted to Anna’s closest friend Claudia (Monica Vitti). Claudia is confused by his advances, rebuffs him and continues the search individually. After the storm and a night in a small shepherd house on the island, Claudia joins Sandro and slowly falls in love with him. The plot never provides an answer about what happened to Anna.

How is ‘being in the landscape’ constructed in *L’Avventura*? In this section, the degree of incorporation of the character’s body in the landscape and the complementarity of their relationships are analyzed. The ‘being in the landscape’ experience is first constructed out of an inversion of the traditional figure-ground relationship. This inversion allows the emergence of an absent presence of the character through the landscape. Finally, this ghosting figure gradually becomes a catalytic agent in the narrative. Is this not where the landscape is transformed into an enacted landscape? I argue that the landscape comes to appear in the world as it is put to task. This means that the landscape’s existence is not founded on its capacity to inscribe action through its expression in the world, but rather on the landscape’s capacity to be self-evocative through practice. In the first scenes shot close to Lisca Bianca Island, the landscape is imaged as one of the characters (Figure 3), but this enactment of the landscape becomes more pronounced as the protagonist disappears.



Figure 3. The insular landscape of Lisca Bianca Island is pictured as one of the characters in the film. Source: Courtesy of the Criterion Collection. *L'Avventura*, 1960. Film. Directed by Michelangelo Antonioni.

The mechanics of the figure-ground inversion occur in two phases. The first involves the construction of the character of Anna, and the second occurs with the shift created by the sudden withdrawal of the emblematic character. From the very beginning, the protagonist, Anna, is presented to us as an uncanny character, caught in an inner conflict. She is different from the rest of a group where everybody is quite carefree (Figure 4). The camera dwells on this peculiar character and an obsessive presence is created. The obsessive presence is related to the *mise-en-scène* and also to the fact that Anna is played by the popular star Lea Massari. Anna's psychological conflict seems to be explained by her unsatisfactory relation with Sandro. The last words she says before vanishing are: "the idea of losing you kills me and yet I do not feel you anymore" (Figure 5). The mysterious character of Anna attracts our attention because she is different from her extroverted friend Claudia as well as the calm Patrizia (Esmeralda Ruspoli). Moreover, the insular landscape of the Aeolian Islands off the Sicilian coast is not naturally playful; on the contrary, it appears familiar but simultaneously foreign and detached from the rest of the world. The island's landscape is imaged through craggy peaks, panoramic views at every twist and turn, blue grottoes, and volcanic monoliths thrusting out of the sea. Aspects of Anna's character are incorporated with the island's landscape: unpredictable, uncertain and unstable. Up to this point, the characters are in a liminal space caught between the sea and the island (Figure 6).

When Anna suddenly disappears the whole group is shocked. Anna's friends scatter across the island and anxiously start searching for her via



Figure 4. The figure-ground initial conditions: Anna (Lea Massari) faces the mineral texture of the insular landscape, and seems different from the rest of the group. Source: Courtesy of the Criterion Collection. *L'Avventura*, 1960. Film. Directed by Michelangelo Antonioni.

bifurcating paths inside the labyrinthic landscape (Figure 7). Slowly, Anna becomes a memory or a shadow and retreats to the background while the cliff edges and chasms of the rocky island come to the foreground. The screen feels completely empty when Antonioni shoots the bifurcating



Figure 5. The figure-ground initial conditions: Anna (Lea Massari) talks to Sandro (Gabriele Ferzetti) before her disappearance in the insular landscape. Source: Courtesy of the Criterion Collection. *L'Avventura*, 1960. Film. Directed by Michelangelo Antonioni.



Figure 6. The frightening landscape in the liminal zone between the sea and the island is a premonitory sign. Source: Courtesy of the Criterion Collection. *L'Avventura*, 1960. Film. Directed by Michelangelo Antonioni.

paths and the cliff edges of the island.² A series of shots shows the characters immobile in a dynamic landscape (Figure 8). The absence of Anna triggers the emergence of the landscape as the subject. Anna is projected onto the landscape as a ghosting figure and absent witness. Owing to an obsessive presence in the beginning of the film with long-take sequences on Anna, her withdrawal from the screen becomes all the more



Figure 7. The metaphorical landscape: between the sea and the island, there is the search for Anna in the labyrinthine landscape. Source: Courtesy of the Criterion Collection. *L'Avventura*, 1960. Film. Directed by Michelangelo Antonioni.



Figure 8. The mechanics of the figure-ground inversion: Claudia (Monica Vitti) and Sandro (Gabriele Ferzetti) are immobile while the landscape is dynamic. Source: Courtesy of the Criterion Collection. *L'Avventura*, 1960. Film. Directed by Michelangelo Antonioni.

momentous for the viewer. Several shots show craggy chasms with no characters at all (Figure 9), or with Sandro (Figure 10) or Claudia (Figure 11). Shots of cliff edges are shown in various climatic conditions, giving them an emotional quality (Figure 9). The shots with Sandro and Claudia are both from the back of the characters (Figures 10 and 11). In filmic convention, such a camera positioning expresses a reflective and nostalgic mode. None of these shots would have had any meaning without the absent presence of Anna. When, for the first time, Sandro and Claudia confront each other, a third character appears in the background: the volcanic Stromboli Island (Figure 12). This sequence gives the impression that there is a hidden witness while the characters face each other in a confession scene. This witness can be understood as 'Anna's being in the landscape.' In the final image of the film, Antonioni again juxtaposes Sandro and Claudia with another potentially active volcano, Mt. Etna. Anna is metaphorically cast onto the landscape and inhabits the film as a 'ghostly being in the landscape.'³ Here, Anna and the landscape are a field of relations that generate and sustain being in the landscape.

The landscape becomes a catalyst that drives the narrative and structures the film's haptical and emotional resonances. In the case of the Aeolian Islands, the general character of the landscape emulates the character of Anna. Patrizia stresses that by saying: "The islands, I do not get them, surrounded by nothing but water, poor things." The islands express solitude and the impossibility of communication. The landscape generates the narrative in two ways. The first method works through the



Figure 9. The absent presence of the character through the landscape: long shots of craggy chasms suggest the absent presence of Anna. Source: Courtesy of the Criterion Collection. *L'Avventura*, 1960. Film. Directed by Michelangelo Antonioni.

landscape's totality. Since the landscape represents the absence of Anna, it acts as a stimulating element on Sandro who has difficulty comprehending her absence. When Patrizia questions Sandro's feelings, Claudia says: "He was up all night long." Emptiness is unbearable for Sandro, so he is driven to take the hand of Claudia the day following the disappearance of Anna.



Figure 10. The absent presence of the character through the landscape: Sandro (Gabriele Ferzetti) confronts the absence of Anna. Source: Courtesy of the Criterion Collection. *L'Avventura*, 1960. Film. Directed by Michelangelo Antonioni.



Figure 11. The absent presence of the character through the landscape: Claudia (Monica Vitti) confronts the absence of Anna. Source: Courtesy of the Criterion Collection. *L'Avventura*, 1960. Film. Directed by Michelangelo Antonioni.

The second way the landscape generates the narrative is by using fragments of the landscape to foreshadow new events. The liminal space between the sea and the island is the territory of fear. The first close images of the island (Figure 6) are textures of an impressive rock barrier,



Figure 12. The landscape is a catalytic agent. When Sandro (Gabriele Ferzetti) and Claudia (Monica Vitti) are confronted to each other, a third character appears in the background: the Volcanic Stromboli Island. Source: Courtesy of the Criterion Collection. *L'Avventura*, 1960. Film. Directed by Michelangelo Antonioni.

appearing like a monumental and powerful obstacle. When Sandro asks “shall we go for a swim,” Claudia responds “not here, it is frightening.” This encounter with the island through fear is an anticipation of the upcoming events, as if the landscape contained cues and invisible signs foreshadowing future events in the narrative. Similarly, at another point in the film, the search for Anna culminates with a severe storm at night, but the characters find refuge in a shepherd house. The morning after the rainstorm, an encounter with the beauty of the sunrise will drive Claudia into a new romance (Figure 13). This dawn of a new day is a signal for Claudia, as she leaves the shepherd’s house and joins Sandro. In summary, the landscape becomes an enduring record and a testimony to the life of Anna. The landscape becomes part of Anna, just as Anna becomes part of the landscape. Anna’s being is now fully incorporated with the landscape, which resonates with the characters and the audience, and structures the spatiality of the narrative.

The practice and effects of ‘being in the landscape’

George Bataille (1985) argues that the landscape has a satellite mode of existence. Hence, the landscape comes into being and is sustained not through something inherent within it but through the everyday practices and activities that surround it. Building on this perspective, Mitch Rose (2002, p. 456) suggests that “the physical being of landscape, its ongoing presence in the world, is contingent upon what it initiates, activates and



Figure 13. The landscape is a catalytic agent. The confrontation of Claudia (Monica Vitti) with the sunrise, the morning after the rainstorm, is going to drive her into a new romance. Source: Courtesy of the Criterion Collection. *L'Avventura*, 1960. Film. Directed by Michelangelo Antonioni.

inspires elsewhere.” Here, Rose is interested in how the landscape comes to appear, or “comes to matter,” to be relevant through *practice*. He argues that “the engine of the landscape’s being is practice: everyday agents calling the landscape into being as they make it relevant for their own lives, strategies and projects” (Rose 2002, p. 457).

What practices constitute the landscape’s being? Between the sea (the horizontal dimension) and the Lisca Bianca Island (the vertical dimension), there is the search for Anna (a dimensionless practice). Metaphorically, these dimensions symbolize the plateau, the pyramid and the labyrinth, respectively (Figure 7). According to Jacques Derrida (1996), the archetype of the labyrinth represents an attempt to construct meaning through the *construction of trajectories* in the landscape. Hence, the landscape’s being is constituted through the unfolding practices that surround it, i.e. the trajectories used in the labyrinthic island. Mitch Rose contends that the landscape is only the practices that make it relevant. He says: “While it appears as a definable material space, its materiality is constituted by the totality of possible performances immanent within it: the constitutive potential of the unfolding labyrinth” (Rose 2002, p. 463). Hence, it is the unfolding of these incongruent practices, similar to operations in a labyrinth, which constitute the landscape’s being and its relation to the body. The body of Anna is now the body of the landscape, the landscape enacts her presence in her absence.

What are the effects of ‘being in the landscape’? Using two meanings of the same word, Mitch Rose explains that “how a landscape matters (how it has *material* effects on our lives) is directly connected to how it matters (how it comes to be *significant* within a network of meanings and relations)” (Rose 2002, p. 456). As a result of the practices invested in the landscape, there are three effects of ‘being in the landscape.’

The first effect can be seen in the *absorption of the physical landscape into interior landscapes*. While walking and looking at the surface of the ground of the island, the very texture of the landscape itself provokes the initial spark of the thought of the characters. The characters go through what Bruno terms “*emotional itineraries*” which *move* them into different affectual states and possible worlds (Bruno 2002, 2006). The landscape becomes a topography of thoughts and feelings. In addition, Antonioni lingers on certain parts of the landscape, dwelling on the architectonics of time after the characters have left the scene. The shots, from the top of cliffs toward the craggy chasms, remind us of the absent presence of Anna. In his sequences, Antonioni uses moments before and after events which, in narrative convention, are called *tempi morti* and help minimize the action and emphasize the experience of the physical landscape and the landscape of thoughts (Darke 1995). In Antonioni’s modernist view, reel time privileges this aesthetic of non-action in order to frame and map (interior) landscapes (Bruno 2007). Actors stop acting and the landscape tells the story. The images are constructed as if the spectator watches the

landscape through the eyes of the characters. The world of his film is the world the audience sees. According to Antonioni: "the world, the reality in which we live is invisible, hence we have to be satisfied with what we see" (Antonioni, cited in Rohdie 1990, p. vi), just as Anna is invisible and visible through 'being in the landscape.' The cinematic landscape resonates with the viewer's thoughts and in a way facilitates immediate access to the imaginary by externalizing the psychic processes of the mind (Morin 2005). Thoughts, emotions and affects are relative to each and every viewer and thus the cinematic landscape engages viewers, enabling them to access Anna's presence and absences in the landscape.

The second effect of 'being in the landscape' is the *construction of atmosphere and mood*. It is created through the evocation of natural components of the landscape. Antonioni uses the experience of the rainstorm as a catharsis providing relief and purging emotional tension of the initial labyrinthic search to signal a new start. The atmosphere is constructed out of natural elements: wind, storm, rain, white clouds, dark clouds, waves, horizon, noisy shore, chasms and mineral texture. The landscape becomes tactile, haptically engaging the characters and viewers with the landscape. This hapticality penetrates the psyche and extends the landscape. The landscape affectively draws forth the feelings, emotions and experiences of the viewer, incorporating their own being into the landscape. Antonioni seems fascinated by the emotion coming from the desolation of this desert landscape revealing life with no ornament. There are numerous resonances of this desolation of the landscape in the film such as the search in the desert island, the deserted cities or the deserted dining room at the end of the film, which seems to be reclaimed by elements of the natural landscape. These resonances tend to magnify the significance of the 'void' in the landscape and its experience in relation to the film's narrative. In emptiness, movement generates affects, as in the ghostly presence of Anna in the landscape.

The third effect of 'being in the landscape' is the *introduction of a metaphorical narrative*. In this labyrinthic landscape of Lisca Bianca Island, the narrative always remains uncertain and is rarely confirmed by words. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, in his book about *L'Avventura*, explains:

Antonioni's way of looking in *L'Avventura* is marked by a certain externality. The characters' feelings are not directly expressed, whether in the dialogue or through efforts of the performance. An idea of what these feelings might be, emerges from the way the characters are viewed and the way they are seen to react to what they themselves are shown to be seeing. (1997, p 46)

Hence, aspects of the characters' mental geographies are implied as they face a perpetuating openness, an unfilled void, and a labyrinth with infinite trajectories.⁴ Antonioni himself says: "It is only when I press my eye against the camera and begin to move the actors that I get an exact

idea of the scene” (Antonioni, cited in Lyman 2007, p. A1). The end result is a tentative narration that consists of a series of views of a landscape where characters enter, perform their actions and depart (Nowell-Smith 1995, p. 20). In conventional film narration, landscapes are defined by the characters who occupy them and by the actions performed in them. For Antonioni, landscape exists prior to the action, and asserts its reality independently of the action performed within it. In fact, there are many shots of the landscape that begin and end with no character in the frame. Hence, Antonioni observes landscape as an additional character among the body of characters. Chris Lukinbeal argues that “through the use of metaphor, meaning and ideology are appropriated into the landscape, the most common example of which is the attribution of human and social characteristics to landscape” (Lukinbeal 2005, p. 13). This enactment of the landscape is crucial to *L'Avventura*. However, Antonioni does not project a set of meanings or ideologies onto the landscape but rather, allows the afore-mentioned appropriation to build a tension between the body and the landscape. This creates a narrative openness that moves beyond identification and effect to harness the infinite possibilities of affect.

Conclusion

Antonioni says: “Our acts, our gestures, our words, are nothing more than the consequences of our *personal situation to the world around us*” (Antonioni 1969, p. 215). *L'Avventura* opened up the possibility of using landscape as the film’s story. Through a bottom-up approach, the film develops from the landscape, generating forms, creating events and situations and then becoming a narration. The landscape, as shown on Lisca Bianca Island, becomes a primary element in the complex visual language in which the film themes develop and from which the characters learn to react and interact. With *L'Avventura*, Antonioni explored a new cinematic language by highlighting the significance of the landscape with respect to the story. This analysis of the film suggests landscape as character but also landscape as determinative of the cinematic narrative structure. The ‘being in the landscape’ and the character’s trajectory through the landscape become essential for the film’s narrative. In fact, the character and the landscape are complementary to one another, each implying the other. Ultimately, the narrative of the film is the end-result of this movement of incorporation between the (characters’ and viewer’s) body and the cinematic landscape (Figure 14). The narrative openness and the labyrinth offer infinite trajectories which, rather than closing off meanings of narrative elements as in classical Hollywood films, actually foster between the viewer, the characters, and the landscape an ongoing process of mediation, emotional deliberation and thought.



Figure 14. The movement of incorporation between the character's body and the cinematic landscape is pictured through the director's use of cross-fading effects. Source: Courtesy of the Criterion Collection. *L'Avventura*, 1960. Film. Directed by Michelangelo Antonioni.

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Notes

1. By the 1890s, rural genre and landscape had dominated American painting for almost a century. An example is William Morris Hunt's large oil painting *Niagara Falls* (1878). It is not surprising, therefore, that early cameramen from the Edison and Lumière Companies turned their movie cameras to subjects they knew would be most welcome. Hence, early 'moving pictures' of the falls followed in the panoramic tradition, and awed audiences with the monumentality of these landscapes.
2. Note that the film was not well received by sections of the audience when it debuted at the Cannes Film Festival in 1960 and the film genre with long-take sequences and evanescent plot was later coined as 'Antonienness'. After a second viewing, the film received the Special Jury Prize: "For a New Movie Language and the Beauty of its Images."
3. Later in the film, Anna's ghostly presence is identified with the camera itself. This is implied in the eerie traveling-shot that advances on Claudia and Sandro along a narrow street as they leave a deserted village. The ghostly presence is a cinematographic construction, but it represents a phenomenon that exists in real life after a person disappears. This ghostly presence is of course detected by the viewers as well as the characters. What the characters feel (the ghostly presence of Anna) is cinematically expressed by the absent presence of the character through fragments of the landscape.

4. Openness refers to the unstable narrative logic, i.e. openness in the narration/interpretation, challenging the viewer to place events or assign them definitive meanings.

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