

WHEN MOVIES TALK ABOUT GEOLOGY

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The Library of the Scientific-Technological Area of Roma Tre, University in Rome - Italy - owns, and periodically updates, a collection of dvd movies dealing with topics protagonists reflecting the scientific and technological world: half of it deals with geology. The end users of the Library may suggest the films that they wish to see. To increase the value of this specialized and unusual scientific collection, our Library has created a page on its website with selected resources concerning the relation between cinema and science, .

The Project, originating from an idea of promoting relax and entertainment, offers to those who deal with geological sciences (from students to researchers) the possibility to see themselves in movies and through movies, both at the level of social representation of their own professional role and at the level of thematic face.

The oral presentation will describe three main areas:

1. The characters. This area individualizes three typologies of geologists that cinema has represented:

- a) the *factotum* scientist often engaged in impossible searches
- b) the unheeded technical alarmist
- c) the treasure seeker

2. The places and the symbols of the Earth. The oral presentation illustrates some places with strong symbolic features: the desert, the volcanoes (in a non catastrophic perspective but as a metaphoric places) and in Italian circle the Pianura Padana. The desert is the true narrative protagonist of the classical western movies and of the Italian spaghetti-westerns. The desert as frontier, crossed in run towards freedom, meets the *road movie* genre (once for all... *Thelma and Louise*).

The volcano as a *place of the soul* in Rossellini's *Stromboli, terra di Dio*; in many Pasolini's movies the Etna is a place where supernatural or mysterious events occur. The Pianura Padana is instead protagonist of many classical movies in the history of Italian cinema (*Gente del Po, Il mulino del Po, Tutti a casa, Ossessione, Paisà, Il grido, Riso amaro, La donna del fiume*), but also of many recent movies.

3. The cinematographic genres: from disaster movies to the "Kolossals". This area identifies some cinematographic traditions. The *Disaster movie* is the cinematographic genre where, with great evidence, geology-related themes are dealt with. It's a recent genre, developed in the 70's, a genre that represents the wild side of nature. Movies belonging to this genre perform spectacular events, with a particular predilection for catastrophic events, such as earthquakes, submarine earthquakes, hurricanes, volcanic eruptions. Showing the unbelievable, which is typical of a commercial production, forces the audience into a "suspension of disbelief".

The disaster movies very often represent the terror and the restlessness of human infancy, accomplishing a "freeing catharsis" function, thus complying with the ancestral need of man to defy dangers. A sacrificial and purifying rite is necessary for human improvement. For this reason these movies always have a happy endings. The characters are strongly stereotyped (often played by popular actors) and there is a wide employment of make-up and of special effects (the sensurround system that in *Earthquake* concurs with the audience to recreate the sensation of being himself in an earthquake provoked great curiosity in 1974). Other movies can be mentioned, which are close to the catastrophic genre for their spectacularity. The blockbuster movies (the ones we call as "Kolossals") with a historical background (*Lawrence of Arabia, The last days of Pompeii, Titanic*), science/fantasy fiction movies (*The Lord of the Rings, Waterworld*) and the faunal tradition's cinema, with animation movies, whose protagonists are animals, creatures of paleontological origin (dinosaurs) or monsters (Godzillas, King Kong) that destroy, unstoppable, the megalopolis of the world and eventually become the solitary heroes of nature against industry.