

Tribute to Peter Bondanella Delivered at the Journal of Italian Cinema and Media Studies Conference, June 10, 2017

I wish Ben Lawton and Penny Marcus were here. Ben and Peter were a formidable duo conspiring at Purdue and Indiana, respectively, to blaze paths in Italian Cinema Studies for people such as Penny and me to follow. And Penny, of course, has been a trailblazer of her own, amassing an extraordinary record as an Italian cinema (and not only) scholar. They would have wonderful things to offer in tribute to Peter were they here today.

I had the good fortune to experience what others have already noted about Peter on the American Association for Italian Studies listserv: his generosity and support for other academics. I was roughly the same age, not a younger academic, but Peter's reputation and letters of recommendation were invaluable in my pursuit of grants, tenure, and promotion. And in recent months, when I

returned to concentrated work on Fellini, I marveled at how much material (including lengthy Italian screenplays) Peter had photocopied and sent me over the years. My bookshelves and file cabinets are laden with Bondanella memorabilia.

I want to be brief, and people are generally familiar with Peter's extraordinary academic accomplishments, so I will focus instead on some more personal things that might offer new insight into Peter as a person.

Gaetana in her tribute on the AAIS website noted Peter's love for his motorcycle and how it managed to enter into any conversation one would have with him. Peter had a similar relationship to Italian greyhounds. He and his lifelong partner Julia had several over time, and they made it into nearly every email from Peter in recent years. He was distraught whenever one would die, and I believe he had two still with him at the end of his life. Peter also took up painting at some

point, and as this portrait of Fellini makes clear, he was quite accomplished.

Julia told me recently that Peter identified in some ways with Fellini, and I like to see this portrait as a self-portrait as well, given the physical similarities between the two men and some perhaps inevitable degree of identification. My co-editors, Marguerite Waller and Marita Gubareva, and I are planning to see that a reproduction of this painting is prominently displayed in our *Wiley Blackwell Companion to Federico Fellini* (2019), as a tribute to Peter's Fellini scholarship.

I would like to conclude with an anecdote that reflects Peter's sensibility and support writ large. He and I were discussing a collaboration from which he had to withdraw, and he wrote the following:

"I have been plagued by the kind of thing that happens when you get older--sickness and the death or dying of friends and relatives. For the last three weeks, I have spent

all my time either with my last remaining Italian family member (she is 96 and in Buffalo, NY) and my handyman at Pine Valley, Utah. In the former case, my aunt broke her hip and had a heart attack afterwards but she is miraculously recovering. And I am the primary care giver for my handyman who is also my very good friend and who has stage 4 lung cancer and has elected hospice care rather than chemo--a wise decision in his case. . . . that means that I am at the cabin or by his side giving him morphine shots and cooking/cleaning up night and day."

Underlying Peter's notorious academic generosity was clearly a much broader humanitarian impulse. Plagued as I am by the death of this invaluable colleague, I will remember him not only for his accomplishments as an Italian scholar, but for his ministrations in Buffalo and Pine Valley.

