

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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THE LADY WITHOUT CAMELIAS (*La Signora senza Camelie*) 1953 Michelangelo Antonioni

OVERVIEW

Antonioni's film title makes reference to *The Lady with Camelias* (*La Dame aux Camélias*), which was a novel written by Alexandre Dumas in 1848, later adapted for the stage and then revised by Verdi for his opera *La Traviata*. It tells the story of a courtesan who wore a white camelia in her hair when she was ready for clients (she wore a red one when she had her period). The small revision in the title of Antonioni's film ('without' replacing 'with') highlights the fact that his heroine Clara is not a woman of loose morals. Although *The Lady with Camelias*, which was the director's third feature film, did not win any awards, in critics have recently re-evaluated its merits and understood its critical place in the development of the director's talents.

SYNOPSIS

Clara Manni is catapulted into stardom by movie executive Gianni in his new film *Woman without Destiny*. But when Gianni decides to marry her, he no longer wants his wife to appear in films with overt displays of passion. His new vehicle for her as a serious actress, *Joan of Arc*, fails badly, which leads to the breakdown of their marriage. As a result, Clara becomes more attentive to Count Rusconi, who has been admiring her from the beginning. Clara goes back to work and stars in *Woman without Destiny* in order to relieve her husband's financial troubles. Now free to pursue her own life, she leaves him and takes up with Rusconi, only to learn that the Count's interest is sexual only. With no alternative, she accepts a role in a B-movie.

PEOPLE

Clara	Clara, also known as 'Manni,' is an actress.
Gianni	Gianni is a movie executive who marries Clara.
Rusconi	Consul Rusconi is a diplomat who falls in love with Clara.
Ercole	Ercole is a producer and a good friend of Clara.
Lodi	Lodi plays the leading man opposite Clara in one of her films.

SCENES

Clara's big chance Inside a cinema in Rome, Clara watches a preview showing of a film in which she has a part. Ercole, the producer, and Gianni, the executive producer, also watch Clara's performance on screen, which thrills the audience with a sad love song. 'We should have made her the star,' the producer says and declares that he will change the script. Gianni agrees and decides to change the title of the film from 'Man without Destiny' to 'Woman without Destiny.' Gianni, who had discovered Clara when she worked as a shop assistant, tries to chat her up, but Clara resists his overtures.

Changes Next morning, on the movie set, the male lead, Lodi, tells Clara that his part has been reduced in order to make her the star. The director also explains that he has made the changes because he needs the film to be a commercial success. A key scene between Clara and Lodi as a married couple will now be shot as a hot scene between lovers.

Kissing scene She and Lodi are directed in the newly-written scene, where he unbuttons her blouse and they kiss passionately on a bed. Clara is convincing in this sensual role and everyone is delighted. She walks off set into secluded space, where Gianni kisses her.

Marriage proposal Next, Clara tells a girl friend that Gianni has asked her to marry him and wants an immediate answer. When Clara goes into the studio, she finds Gianni with her parents, who congratulate her on her marriage. Clara tries to explain that nothing is settled, but Gianni says he couldn't wait and the parents gush with best wishes for them.

Count Rusconi A big scene in the new film is being shot in a large private villa, where a crowd has gathered for the occasion. The director and producer are mortified to learn that Clara will not be arriving because she's on her honeymoon. Clara and Gianni finally arrive, and a man in the crowd, Consul Rusconi, is caught by her beauty.

Career over Gianni tells Ercole, the producer, that he will no longer permit Clara to act in films. He waves around a newspaper photo of her in the sensational 'kissing scene' (which he had approved) and shouts that her career is over. Gianni persuades a reluctant Clara to give up acting and become a housewife, but it is clear that she has not been informed of his decision.

Unhappy Clara Clara is in her marital home, which is being redecorated. One of the workmen says that he saw her last night in one of her old films in a nearby cinema. Clara is driven to the cinema, where she is immediately recognised by a group of children. She walks up to the poster of herself, takes one look and leaves. Later, she confronts Gianni about his decision to end her acting career. 'I'm completely bored,' she admits. 'I need to work.'

Joan of Arc Ercole tells Gianni that he wants to make a new film called 'The Lady without Camelias' (the same title as Antonioni's film). But Gianni is incensed that the story is about a prostitute. He says that he wants to do a serious film, 'Joan of Arc,' with Clara as the star. Ercole doesn't believe either he or Gianni is capable of such a big film and leaves.

Disaster Gianni makes *Joan of Arc*, with Clara playing Joan. When Gianni and Clara walk into the premiere in Venice, she is applauded by the crowd, which includes Count Rusconi. The film, however, is a disaster. On the train back to Rome, Clara accuses Gianni of controlling her, even marrying her when he knew she didn't love him.

Lover and husband Under a leaden sky, Rusconi challenges Clara to deny that they are in love. She cannot. In the next scene, she is waiting for him at his house and submits to his love-making. When she returns to her home that evening, Gianni is unconscious from taking too many sleeping pills because he is facing financial failure. Ercole tells Clara that the only way to end his depression is to finish the 'Woman without Destiny' (which had been halted by her marriage). When production restarts, Clara explains to Rusconi that she is trying to free herself from her husband by earning money that will solve his financial problems. She says she wants to pay back her 'debts.'

Clara leaves The premiere of 'Woman without Destiny' is a roaring success, which allows Clara to finally separate from her husband. She writes Gianni a letter explaining that she is leaving him, but Rusconi advises her to destroy the letter to 'avoid a public scandal.' She appears to agree but leaves the letter and runs off with Rusconi.

Rusconi's doubts Staying with Rusconi as his lover, Clara telephones Gianni and agrees to meet him in Rome to settle things. Rusconi expresses doubts about her plan for a divorce. 'It will affect me, too,' he points out. 'My career, my contacts with others.'

Friend's advice Back in Rome, Clara meets Lodi, her old leading man, and explains that Rusconi only wanted an affair and now she has nothing. Lodi says that she had too much early success and recommends that she try to become a 'serious actress.'

New possibilities Two months later, after taking acting lessons, Clara is living by herself. She turns down an offer for a part in a low-budget movie because she wants the female lead in a new film produced by Gianni. On the way to Gianni's studio, she is confronted by Rusconi, who wants to see her again, but she brushes him off.

Disappointment At the studio, Gianni is happy to see her but says that the big part in his film has been given to an American. 'Let me give you some advice,' he says. 'You have a good name, but...well, youth's not eternal.'

Lowered ambition Saddened, she tells Ercole that she will never be a serious actress. Then, she accepts the offer from the producer whom she had turned down earlier that day. He takes her to his studio, where 'The Slave of the Pyramids' is being shot in a desert setting with harem girls milling about tents.

Acceptance The producer escorts her to a restaurant to sign the contract and celebrate. There, she calls Rusconi to say that she feels better and will see him later that night. The producer organises an impromptu press conference, at which Clara stands with her co-actors in the B-movie. As the camera

bulbs flash, she holds back the tears and manages a half-convincing smile.

THEMES

1. Society

film industry The overriding theme of this Antonioni film is cinema itself, specifically Italian cinema in the early 1950s, when it was released. Like other films about the film industry (for example, Chaplin's *Behind the Screen*, Lynch's *Mulholland Drive*, Altman's *The Player*, Fellini's *8 & 1/2* and Godard's *Le Mepris*), it depicts both the glamour and the despair that actors, directors and producers experience. In the end, the glittering celluloid images not only mask but actually increase the personal tragedy that befalls Clara, the star. The film is also a scathing attack on the commercialism of the Italian movie business, which ignores serious cinema while manipulating people and eroding their self-worth.

popular cinema Antonioni's view of Italian cinema is summed up in a scene where Ercole articulates a 'formula' that dominated popular cinema at the time. Ercole has come to Gianni's and Clara's house with a new script, 'The Lady without Camellias,' which Gianni doesn't like because it's about a girl who becomes a prostitute. 'But we're dealing with actual problems,' Ercole argues, 'the Merlin law.' (This is a reference to a 1959 law that banned brothels and, as an unintended consequence, forced women onto the streets.) Gianni protests and says he will only allow Clara to act in a 'serious film, an art film, one that will go abroad.' He suggests 'Joan of Arc,' which prompts Ercole to say, 'We need a love story. For me the formula is: sex, politics and religion. All together.' By 'sex' he means kissing and embracing, not the nudity that would become commonplace in later decades. The formula is what leads to the breakdown of the collaboration between Ercole and Gianni.

stardom The problem of stardom in the Italian film industry are vividly illustrated in the opening sequence. Clara goes timidly into the cinema to see audience reaction of a preview showing of a film in which she sings at the end. After the rapturous reception of her performance, a group of men stand outside on the pavement and decide her future. 'Was she found in a beauty pageant?' one audience member asks, and Gianni explains that he 'discovered' her in a shop in Milan. She has been 'discovered,' like an empire finds a new territory to colonise. The framing of these shots is also instructive. A tight knot of men, principally Gianni and Ercole, obscure the only woman in the frame, while they discuss how to remake the film and launch Clara into fame. Gianni is at the centre of this male control, announcing the new title for the film ('The Woman without Destiny') and giving instructions to the writers on how to rewrite the script. Clara is nowhere to be seen. She is only an actress, mute clay to be moulded by the men who control the industry.

sex on screen Sexuality enters the story when Gianni and Ercole decide to make Clara the star of 'The Woman without Destiny.' They tell the writers to spend the whole night rewriting the script and they shoot the following morning. In the revised script, Clara and Lodi are lovers, not spouses, and Clara is given a sexy costume. He lays her down on the bed, unbuttons part of her blouse and when they kiss, she matches or even surpasses his passion. As she rolls on top of him and adopts a sensual pose, a voice in the background is heard: 'What about the censors?' When the scene is over, Clara asks in her normal voice, 'Was that good?' Told that it was 'great,' she demurely asks for her dressing gown to cover up. A moment later, Gianni follows her behind a set and kisses her. Sexual passion displayed on the set does not stop when the scene ends.

film-within-a film *The Lady without Camellias* uses the technique of a film-within-a-film to comment on differing attitudes toward sex on the screen and in society. In *The Lady without Camellias*, Ercole, Gianni and Clara are involved in making a film called 'The Woman without Destiny.' During the aborted shooting in the private villa, one of the family members summarizes the plot of this film-in-the-making: 'She [Clara] plays a girl from Calabria who's seduced by a fellow countryman. She comes to this house as a maid, he arrives and they run away. It ends badly.' This is more or less that plot of *The Lady without Camellias*, too. The key difference is that the sexuality shown in the film (even with censorship cuts) cannot be enacted in real life.

male dominance When Clara gets married, Gianni will not permit her to act in scenes with sexual passion. In fact, Gianni and other men have controlled Clara from the moment she entered the film industry until her fall from stardom at the end. She is 'discovered' by men, cast by men, has her films directed and produced by men.

Clara recast Another revealing scene, in terms of the male domination of film-making, occurs much later, after Clara has been married and her husband has forbidden her from making films with any passionate scenes. Ercole arrives at their house and discusses his new script with Gianni. The producer enters the lavishly appointed home and sees Clara, dressed as a housewife at the top of the stairs. 'So this is how your husband thinks he can keep you from working?' he jokes, gesturing to her lovely home. Clara only giggles as Ercole is welcomed into a study area and engages in a heated debate with Gianni about 'serious' versus 'popular/romantic' films. Clara comes silently down the stairs, sits down and pours herself a cup of tea or coffee. The two men stalk each other around the room, arguing about her future, while she looks on without speaking a word. From time to time, one of them glances at Clara, who listens silently. Finally, Gianni says he will make 'Joan of Arc,' with Clara as the noble young girl. It's all settled, a new career for the actress, who has had zero input into the decision.

2. Love

Clara and Gianni:

bored housewife After she is married to Gianni, we see that Clara is struggling to adjust to her new 'role' as a housewife, but she hasn't read the script very well. IN one telling scene, she hears from a workman in her house that one of her old films is playing in the local cinema. Bored and missing her old working life, she steals out to have a look at the posters. She is recognised by some children and for a brief moment relives her fame.

marital breakdown Given the problems between Clara and Gianni on the movie set, it is no surprise that their marriage eventually breaks down. The trouble begins with the announcement of their marriage to Clara's parents, before Clara has even given her consent. Then, he restricts her acting and recasts her in his own image of a female star, which proves a disaster. Following that failure at the box office, Clara finally understands how Gianni has manipulated her from start to finish. She leaves him and takes up with Rusconi, which looks like an escape but only leads to further tragedy.

Clara and Rusconi

seduction Like the character in 'The Woman without Destiny' (the film-within-the-film), Clara is seduced by a lover, in the form of Count Rusconi. Up to that point, he has been gentlemanly, persistent but not aggressive. But when her marriage with Gianni breaks down, she allows herself to be drawn into a love affair with the handsome Rusconi. She has been unfaithful only on the screen, but now with her marriage in tatters, she is tempted to take a lover in real life. The moment of her surrender is dramatically shot. When he mounts the stairs to his apartment, she is standing there on the landing, dressed all in black, like a widow. She lets him come close to her and says, 'Don't ask me anything, please.' They embrace, she is still hesitant but gives in and kisses him passionately. It is a powerful scene for its near-silence and choreography. Clara has taken the plunge into the waters of an illicit love affair. It is the crucial step in a downward spiral in both her personal and professional life. As the young woman said when summarising the plot of 'The Woman without Destiny,' 'It ends badly.'

betrayal Rusconi not only seduces Clara but he later abandons her. The lovers are in a hotel room, when Clara telephones Gianni and agrees to meet to finalise their separation. Rusconi immediately senses that this would look bad for him and advises Clara to think things over and not make a hasty decision. IN this scene, Rusconi reveals just how untrustworthy he is. Unfortunately, Clara was desperate when he wooed her and was blind to his true intentions.

3. QUEST

Clara Clara is the star of the film, in every sense. She is discovered while working in a shop in Milan and then brought to Rome, where she is thrust into the limelight and becomes a sensation overnight. That sudden fame is intoxicating, and Clara becomes addicted to her life as a star. Marriage to a director derails her career, but she pines to get back on screen. Her return (as the star of *Joan of Arc*) is a disaster and she becomes entangled with a deceptive seducer. Later, though, she takes acting classes in order to learn the craft and hopes to make another comeback, but she is only able to land a part in a B movie. Her quest to become a star was successful, but remaining at that level proved too difficult.

Gianni Gianni is a skilful and persuasive man, who wants to direct great films. Not popular movies,

like the producer Ercole, but 'serious' movies that will garner an international audience. He makes a speech to Clara about his next movie being made with his 'own blood.' His ambition is so strong that it blinds him to popular appeal and ruins the career of his actress-wife. At the end of the story, Clara is a professional failure, while Gianni is still planning a new film, with an American actress in the lead role. His energy is boundless.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Clara Clara is the star of the story, a dazzling beauty who is launched overnight into a romantic leading lady. Coming from a working class background, she is overwhelmed and manipulated by others. Slowly, she gains self-confidence, but it is too late. Throughout the story she is kind and considerate, though also passive and conciliatory.

Timid Clara's initial appearance in the film establishes an important feature of her character: her timidity. The very first shot tracks her as she walks up and down on the pavement outside the cinema, waiting for the audience reaction to a test screening. As she waits for the big moment, she is tentative and unsure, nervously flicking imagined specks from her jacket and patting her hair. We don't know who she is and neither do the passers-by. She seems to be reflecting, trying to size up the situation. Is this what I really want? Will I be any good? Suddenly, she approaches the door of the cinema and wants to enter without a ticket. 'It's almost over,' one of the guards says, and the other lets her go in. She watches herself on screen singing a sad love song, lamenting a false lover's lies. Suddenly, she disappears. She is afraid that it is no good.

Submissive After her sudden success with the test screening, Clara gains confidence as an actress and performs brilliantly in a delicate romantic scene with Lodi. But she is still submissive off the set, as illustrated in the crucial scene when she finds out that she is about to be married to Gianni. Although he has asked her to marry him, she is not sure what answer to give him. But when she enters his room at the studio, she is greeted by her mother, who gushes with enthusiasm about her coming marriage. Hearing those words, Clara looks confused. Gianni says he told them, and she points out that 'nothing's settled yet.' Her mother prattles on about the wonderful news, Gianni puts an arm around her shoulder and Clara is too stunned to protest. 'I told your parents in order to have their approval,' he explains with a big smile. Clara does not smile, but neither does she speak out and squash the plans. Instead, she meekly follows the path laid out for her by Gianni.

Decisive Clara is transformed by the failure of *Joan of Arc*, which was meant to be the perfect collaboration between husband/movie executive and wife/star. As the deflated couple travel by train from Venice back to Rome, Clara finally finds her voice. When Gianni is angry with her for 'not seeing beyond her image,' she says, 'I've seen more than that.' She admits that the film's failure is her fault as much as his but then launches into a mini-speech: 'You hurled me into this adventure [making *Joan of Arc*] without giving me time to reflect. That's how you work. We're like two strangers. But worse because one is often more sincere with a stranger. I've always let you persuade me. When you told me to come to Rome, when you married me and when you made me do this film.... Maybe I've never thought about the consequences or I ignored them to avoid being scared. I'm scared every time I see myself on screen. I have to repeat to myself ten times a minute. "That's me. That's me." Why did you marry me? You knew I didn't love you even if I didn't have the courage to tell you.' He attempts to convince her that she's just upset about the film and that he loves her. But when he embraces her, she slaps him. This is the beginning of the end of their marriage, when Clara has been able to see beyond her image on the screen.

Considerate Despite her recognition of the failure of their marriage, Clara bears Gianni no ill will. Indeed, after he takes an overdose of sleeping pills because of money problems, she becomes the Joan of Arc that she played on screen, rescuing him from his financial woes by starring in the rehabilitated *Woman without Destiny* and earning a lot of money for him with which to pay off his debts. The key scene comes after she has become Rusconi's lover and meets him in an abandoned stage set. He wants to know what her plans are, and she explains that Gianni is in a financial mess and that she feels obligated to help him. She also comments that his illness felt like a punishment because it happened on the same day that she became Rusconi's lover. Suddenly, she turns and says (with self-delusion), 'If my husband ruined himself, it was for me.' Rusconi presses her for an answer about when they can be together, and she says, 'My marriage has become a business. Let me pay my debts.' She has no illusions any more, recognising that her marriage, like her acting, is a financial arrangement. But despite the lack of sentiment, she is committed to be fair to her husband.

Defeated The final shot of the film, just like the first scene, is central to understanding how Clara changes in the arc of the film. In the opening scene, Clara shoots to stardom, whereas in the last image she has dropped into despair. Having been rejected by Gianni for a starring role in his new film, she accepts a role in a silly film with a second-rate director and inferior actors. The director, of course, is thrilled to have La Manni (Clara's stage name) in the picture and he hurriedly arranges a publicity photograph. With her head bowed, she joins the actors and actresses, who are wearing cheap-looking oriental costumes. The director puts his arm around her as they face the camera. Except Clara's head is still lowered. 'Lift your head, miss,' the photographer says. Slowly, Clara, the once great La Manni, raises her head, shakes away the tears and tries to smile. Her struggle to produce that magical smile is a marker of the price she has paid for stardom.

Gianni Gianni is a middle-aged movie executive, infatuated with his job and his ability to make a 'great' movie. In pursuit of his goals, he is controlling and insensitive toward others, especially Clara, his wife. His self-belief leads to marital and financial disaster, although by the end of the film, we see a more mature and detached man.

Manipulative From the very start, we notice that Gianni is adept at getting others to do what he wants. He persuades, he argues and he manipulates. The most consequential example of his manipulative technique is the scene in which he gets himself engaged to Clara without her actually consenting to the arrangement. At that point, he has kissed her (off stage) and asked to marry her, but she hasn't answered. Still mulling over her answer, she goes to the studio and finds her parents in Gianni's office. They embrace, and the parents congratulate her on her marriage. Aghast, Clara looks at Gianni, who merely shrugs and says, 'I told them. You mind?' With that question, he turns the tables and puts her on the spot: she is the one who is forced to answer. Why would she deny her parents such happy news? When she protests that nothing has been settled, he smiles and puts his arm around her, while her mother compliments her on her good looks. We also learn, from a side comment, that Gianni has sent a cheque to the family, which came in handy in paying the father's recent hospital bills. Both parents declare themselves happy that their daughter is finally 'settled.' In other words, Gianni has announced his engagement to them before Clara has agreed. He also brought them to his studio, knowing that she would not want to disappoint them by refusing to accept the marriage. He is a clever man, who gets what he wants.

Idealist A more admirable feature of Gianni's character is his idealism regarding the cinema. Unlike Ercole, the likable producer, Gianni wants to make quality films that will appeal to an international audience. He articulates his purist vision in a long discussion with Ercole over the next film for Clara. While Ercole favours a melodrama about a girl, which Gianni sums up as a 'series of obscene events' that turns Clara's character into a prostitute. Ercole says it reflects the social reality in recent legislation, and Gianni explodes: 'So the law is an excuse for her [Clara] being a prostitute?' Gianni then lays out his vision of Italian cinema. He wants to make an art film that will travel abroad. He wants to make 'Joan of Arc.' Ercole counters that it's been done too many times already. 'So what?' cries Gianni. 'They're always good, they're classics. It depends on how you do it.' When the unconvinced Ercole leaves and Clara expresses doubts about his idea, Gianni says, 'Do you want to make films or pornography?' Clara is upset by that crude remark, and Gianni says, 'The film is made for you! Made by me! With my own blood!' It is a brave and idealistic mission statement, but unfortunately, when the film is made, it is a disastrous failure.

Ercole Unlike the lean, hawk-faced Gianni, Ercole, the producer, is a corpulent and fleshy man. Like Gianni, though, he is obsessed with making movies and sometimes goes berserk on the set. Still, he is always affable, practical and instinctively kind to others, particularly to Clara, whose career he has helped to create. In her hour of need, he is there to support her.

Tempestuous Ercole displays his tempestuous nature in one of the few comic scenes in the film. He is all ready to shoot some scenes in a private villa, except that Clara has not arrived. Already sweating, he is told that she went on her honeymoon with Gianni. Now, he begins to pull out his hair and explain to the director that they'll have to do with a body double. 'What's a body double?' one of the ladies of the house asks innocently, and he just manages to keep his temper as he explains. Meanwhile, workmen are laying down cable and mounting lights in the cramped rooms. A union representative takes a telephone call about how much to pay people. The family in the villa keep asking about the missing Clara. The director complains about that actress who is to replace Clara is anything but a 'body double.' The director asks what he will do, and Ercole burst out in anger. 'Don't keep looking at me! I haven't slept in three days! I sent telegrams [to Clara]. We need to call the police or the mental asylum!' Poor Ercole has reached the end of his tether.

Supportive Ercole has always treated Clara with respect and kindness, and that quality is best illustrated in a scene toward the end of the film. Clara is living on her own, separated from Gianni and Rusconi. She's taken acting lessons and hears that Gianni is ready to start a new film with a strong female lead. She needs help, so whom does she call? She calls Ercole, who arrives and listens to her explain that she wants to see Gianni and asks him to drive her to his studio. As she talks, Ercole listens patiently, without passing judgement, just asking questions to clarify her thinking. He doesn't criticise Gianni either, not wanting to turn her against him if she needs his help to revivify her career. As they walk out through the hotel lobby to his car, a photographer and journalist are about to pester her when Ercole steps in front and prevents them. He is the perfect friend, supportive and protective.

Rusconi Count Rusconi, a diplomat married to a rich man's daughter, is the villain of the piece. Slim, slick-haired and moustachioed, he has the looks of a matinee idol. Unfortunately, he is the real-life admirer of Clara and deceives her about his intentions. Ultimately, he shows himself to be vacuous and self-absorbed.

Romantic Rusconi has been waiting for his opportunity to woo Clara, whom he first saw in his wife's family villa when the shooting was shut down after her marriage to Gianni. Now, he is on the scene when she is in despair after the disastrous premier of *Joan of Arc*. He follows her from the cinema hall and accompanies her back to her hotel. They are on a boat in the most romantic of settings—the canals of Venice. She weeps and he strokes the top of her head. They have hardly spoken, but he follows close on her heels like a hound. She apologises for her crying in front of him, a near stranger, and he begins to turn on the charm. 'You can go to a film even if you're not interested in cinema,' he says. 'I went just for you. Actually, I'm in Venice only for you.' She turns and walks away, but he is there at her side, staring at her. 'When can I see you again?' he asks, and she gives a vague answer about Rome. He takes her hand and raises it to his lips in farewell. She turns to go, but he does not release her hand, forcing her to turn back and face him. He smiles knowingly and then drops the hand. He has made a statement of romantic intent.

Selfish Lover boy shows his true colours much later in the story, after Clara has left Gianni and run off with him. They are staying together in a hotel, like a married couple, when she has a telephone conversation with Gianni back in Rome. When Rusconi wants to know what she said, she says, 'I told him the truth. That I'm not going back to him. That I've started afresh.' Hearing that, Rusconi pulls a face and says, 'I'm not sure you're really aware of what you're doing.' Clara looks concerned and he continues. 'These aren't decisions that one should make lightly. It will also affect my life. Not only my career, but my relationships with other. For me, that's important. Extremely important.' He speaks without looking at Clara and waits for her reaction, which is to hide her realisation that he has just been using her for a fling. He has let her down gently, but he is a selfish cad, nonetheless.



(Gianni and Clara)



(Clara and Ercole)



(Clara and Rusconi)