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*Docu-realities in Naples, cultural fluidity and variabilities.*

Several cinematic productions have aimed to portray the *integration process* for immigrants in Italy during the last decades. Only few films have been successful to present the comprehensive realistic edges for the integration processes for immigrants interacting with the local population. These realities are more evident in documentaries especially because they include the fluidity and interweaved dimensions for subsistence. Documentaries transmit emotions for the abilities needed to endure the day-to-day life. This type of fluidity is unmistakable in Naples as an immigration corridor for many seeking to fulfil their reverie for settlement; however, the landing is also entangled by the same residents’ struggles to persevere in an unsympathetic and adverse environment. These *docu-realities* are meant to convey emotions such as disorientation, which is in opposition with the idealist views of integration.

This presentationapproaches selected filmic works as trajectories of citizen consciousness to understand multiple constructions of fluidity in an everchanging reality of citizenship and identity.

Umberto Eco in his *Migrazione e Intolleranza*, a collection of his writings and talks to public, states: “Si ha *immigrazione* quando alcuni individui … si trasferiscono da un paese all’altro (come gli italiani o gli irlandesi in America, …). I fenomeni d’immigrazione possono essere controllati politicamente, limitati, incoraggiati, programmati o accettati…Si ha *migrazione* quando un intero popolo, a poco a poco, si sposta da un territorio a un altro e non è rilevante quanti rimangano nel territorio originale, ma in che misura i migranti cambino radicalmente la cultura del territorio in cui hanno migrato. (p.24) *Immigration* is different from *migration* in the measure that the first is contained in number and one example is the immigration of Italians to the United States; the second shapes more radically the culture of country in which the migrants arrive. Umberto Eco goes on comparing the Roman patricians to the contemporary prejudiced citizens. In fact, even though the Patricians opposed to grant *cives romani* to Gauls, Sarmatian, and Jews the society became multiethnic for more than five hundred years regardless. And he goes on: “I fenomeni che l’Europa cerca ancora di affrontare come casi di immigrazione sono invece casi di migrazione…I razzisti dovrebbero essere (in teoria) una razza in via di estinzione. He claims that Europe is going through cases of migration, therefore the xenophobes should become extinct.

The latest ISTAT findings (The Italian National Institute of Statistics for official statistics in Italy) in January 2020, reveal that there are over 5 million foreign residents in Italy or 8.7% of the population. The major country of origin representatives is Romania (1 million), Albania, Morocco, China, Ukraine, Philippines, India, Bangladesh, Egypt, and Pakistan.

The migration setting is therefore homogeneous and in constant development. Several generations of immigrants alternate in time and places across Italy’s territory. The fluid migratory scenario including the latest in large scale from African countries, result into a complex demographic transformation which require appropriate integration policies.

According to the Marryam-Webster dictionary: Integration is “the act or process or an instance of integrating such asincorporation as equals into society or an organization of individuals of different groups.”

In a New York times article of 2016, Delia Baldassarri and Maria Abascal stated, “We should not take for granted that societies will inevitably adapt to increasing diversity in ways that further social *integration*.”

Integration is not a linear process that starts from point A and arrives to point B. It is a process that might not completely resolve itself either. Because societies are everchanging, the processes of blending into a new social environment is a difficult and tortuous passage for a wide number of migrating individuals coming from different backgrounds.To understand the integration journey undertaken by immigrants in a new society is also an arduous task. Each individual represents a biosphere of her own, which can clash with the social ecosystems of the new country.

The realities surrounding immigration movements fluctuate between well-intentioned programs and restrictive immigration policies. Western countries, including the U.S. and Italy have seen an increase in migration. During the last decades, Italy has been highly impacted by migration. In the latest years, the perception of immigrants has also been changed by anti-immigrant policies. Bisin and Zanella claim “These tensions seem motivated in large part by the perception that immigration imposes cultural externalities on the native population and that immigrants integrate slowly if at all. In fact, sizeable adverse labour market and welfare effects are far from well-documented (Bisin and Zanella 2017)”.

A recent study of immigrant minorities integration in Italy by Bisin and Tura in 2019, reported that “higher rates of marriage between immigrants and the native population encourage a higher acceptance of minority cultures, which in turn allows immigrants to better maintain their distinctive cultural traits” and 75% of immigrants converge to Italian language in the second generation; however, with some differences from one ethnicity group to another. While studies such as this may contribute to assess the immigrant’s integration, in opposition, there is still to consider the obstructive policies in the country and the social environment in which the immigrants come to.

Since 1990s, the immigration phenomena in Italy has inspired immigrant authors to write literary texts regarding their experiences. One example is represented by Igiaba Scego, as writer and a journalist of Somali origins, she been promoting her perspective on migration especially through historical research. Her last work, *La linea del colore* (Bompiani, 2020), is a work of fiction in which the author discusses Blackness and Italiannes concepts in shaping the current Italian society.

In the last few years there has also been a prolific cinematic production in reference to immigration and integration; however, initially, it has encountered difficulties in the adaptations of immigrants’ factual stories. Contributing to this is probably a cultural subordination from the dominant *Italian* point of view factor.

As a result, immigration films lacked attention in film studies and cultural studies fields especially in Italy. Nonetheless, some criticism has emerged from contemporary writers such as Giancarla Vanoli, who by her international experience in Italian Studies, discusses cinema and immigration in her text *Nella terra di mezzo, cinema e immigrazione in Italia 1990-2010* (2018)*.* Based on the philosopher Edgar Morin’s theories in media studies, Giancarla Vanoli underlies the influences between cinema and immigration in creating a hybrid model between realism and imaginary. Ultimately, cinematic productions started functioning as a mirror in which the Italian spectator is in front of her own reflection by viewing both positive and negative aspects of the social environment in which the migrants disembark.

From an anthropological reflection there is the fact that Italy went from being a country of emigrants into becoming a country of immigrants. For this reason, the mass media also adapted into representing these changes explicitly. A new generation of Italian filmmakers has emerged during the last twenty years of societal and political transformation.

The intensification of migration phenomena in Italy has called several film directors to investigate the connections among locals and migrants in all the complexities derived from a crisis point of view. The new productions have focused on experimenting with representations of the immigrants interacting with the local population after their journeys to the new country.

In this context, we find documentaries based on original life stories with the immigrants as the subjects themselves. *Io Sono Qui (2017)* by Sicilian director Gabriele Gravagna represents one such form.

The film has screened at national and international film festivals and received an award for Best Documentary Short at the Los Angeles Film Awards in 2018. In Italy, the film has been presented in schools to debunk stereotypes and improve the of immigrants’ experiences who are seeking a better life in Italy.

The documentary depicts the story of three migrants Omar, Dine, and Magassouba. They arrived in Sicily as unaccompanied migrant minors after difficult passage through the Saharan desert and across the Mediterranean. The three young men recount their experiences from the point of their arrival at the reception centers in Palermo, which facilitated their integration in Italy.

The documentary director Gravagna was inspired by the stories of injustice he apprehended from media reportages; however, he wanted to cover immigrants’ life stories upon their arrival in Italy. At the presentation of the film at Teatro Politeama in Palermo in 2017, The director claimed “Migration is natural. I migrated to Rome, others have migrated to Sicily, others to elsewhere in Europe or the world. So, it is something very natural, but mistakenly perceived as an invasion or emergency. The story I wanted to show here is very different – that many organizations are intervening in a way that is intelligent and consistent with the values of solidarity.”

More recently, Megan Carney*,* assistant professor in the School of Anthropology at the University of Arizona examined closely migrant youth engagement with state-sponsored forms of reception, andthe local population: *the siciliani.* In reference to Gravagna’s film prof. Carney wrote her article published in 2019: *Io Sono Qui, a film that upends narratives of “crisis” through the voices of migrant youth;* the articledescribes how forms of media such as documentaries can highlight significant aspects of migrant’s experiences besides the details of residents’ anxiety or uncertainties of reception systems.

During the last two decades, only few films have been successful to present realistic elements for immigrants in their process of integration in the new society. These realities are conclusively evident in documentaries because they include the fluidity and interweaved dimensions for subsistence in the processes of integration.

In the context of uncertainty and hostility toward migrant populations, the approaches of representations have also been developing in varied hybrid models. Some cinematic productions have embedded elements of fiction into actual stories to favor a full-length film and to present the topic from an unusual angle as well. Some of these *docu-fictions* or *docu-realities* show complex authenticities into a dramaturgic structure.

Particularly, there are films released in the last few years, which have represented the complexities of integration in Naples, one of the largest cities in the south of Italy counting more than a million inhabitants.

Within this specific geographical and social context, there are two films that we are taking in consideration: *Rosa Pietra e Stella* (2020) by Marcello Sannino and *Vieni a vivere a Napoli* (2017) by Guido Lombardi, Edoardo De Angelis & Francesco Prisco.

These films are keen to the approach to narrate immigrants’ integration interviewed with local residents’ also thriving to fulfil their needs of sustenance.

This is a difficult objective given the specificity of the city of Naples as both a unique and multiethnic environment. The *docu-realities* presents known Neapolitan stereotypes while observing the experiences of immigrants’ process for integration among Neapolitans.

*Vieni a vivere a Napoli* was produced by Alessandro and Andrea Cannavale in collaboration with Rai Cinema and carries the label of “an unusual comedy”. The film has been recognized as being of cultural interest with economic contribution of the Ministry of Heritage and Cultural Activities in 2017.

The dreamlike stories create the comic atmosphere. However, the film is also representing the cohabitation between immigrant characters from different backgrounds such as Chinese, Ukrainian, and Singhalese with the local citizens and their idiosyncrasies. The result is fairly dramatic given the schizophrenic dimension in which the three short stories develop. The traditional stereotypes meet the reality of contemporary social interactions. In the first episode *Nino and Yoyo* by Guido Lombardi, there is Nino, a Neapolitan *mammone*. Nino is a doorman who lives of deceptions in an upper-class condominium. He is protected by his sister. Nino’s sister, Anna, is also Yoyo’s nanny, a Chinese boy whose mother work prevent her from spending time with him.

Nino is reluctant to interact with Yoyo because of his preconceptions regarding immigrants. When his sister leaves for a trip, Nino delegates condominium duties to the young boy. However, later on, Nino becomes an accepting and empathetic friend to Yoyo.

It is interesting to notice how this story was inspired by the factual interchange among Neapolitans with immigrants through babysitting services. In an article published in *La Repubblica* by Anna Laura DeRosa in 2012, it was reported that immigrant workers, who are paid under-the-table, habitually receive babysitting services by locals through undeclared pay as well. This type of support often times is a demonstration of solidarity by providing clothing and food at no extra cost.

A second episode in *Vieni a vivere a Napoli* is *Luba* by Francesco Prisco. The story deals with Luba Volkova, a Ukrainian show star whose husband’s political corruption forced her to leave the country. In Naples she becomes the caretaker of an elderly cantankerous man. The prejudices from the man and his family leads her to lose her job and wander the streets of Naples at night. After several adverse instances she is able to reconstruct herself by benefitting from the media clamor about her misfortunes. This story was inspired by the conditions in which many migrant “badanti” or caretakers have to struggle with especially because they cannot obtain a work visa. A tragic story is the one of Natalia Dimitrova Beliova, a *badante*, who died saving from a fire the elderly couple that she was caring for from a fire this past March 8th, 2020.

The third episode *Magnifico Shock* by Edoardo De Angelis is the story of a neo-melodic singer Miriam who is disenchanted with her insufficient talent. She is forced by her manager to perform at several close-scheduled events. Amila (Diggamaralalage Bagga) Lankapira is a young Singhalese recently hired at a coffee shop as a waiter. He is told by his supervisor to never leave without being paid. When the singer’s manager does not pay for the coffee delivery, Amila follows Miriam and her manger into their car. At the end of the day, Amila helps Miriam comforting her and supporting her in a singing duet.

Singhalese are the second population of immigrants in Naples. Their community has been integrating and interacting with the natives by finding work especially in the household work and in the restaurant business.

*Vieni a vivere a Napoli* is fundamentally an unconventional and good-willed comedy and has the strength to alleviate some of the xenophobic conflicts that arise with the interactions of immigrants and the native population. It is the tales of integration for three different migrating populations in Naples, which is a city of contradictions, however, always renovating itself accordingly. Naples has always been represented in its antithesis of attractiveness and jaggedness. All inhabitants, immigrants and locals live in a feeling of expectations to be resolved imminently, except for when it can slip out of hands. Neapolitans and migrants both find the strength to renovate themselves laboriously in spite of the difficulties even at high costs from both sides.

The immigrants’ attempt for “integration” in the city of Naples seem to be in contrast with the vicissitudes of Neapolitans who are also trying to make a living for themselves. However,

by reflecting on this so-called *unusual* *comedy*, we know that there is an intense reality for each of the three stories. Behind the tantrums of the *Neomelodic* singer Miriam in her deflected career as it has been for several *Neomelodic* Neapolitan singers in the last decades, we also notice how the Singhalese Amila bacomes the Neapolitan singer’s *rescuer* with his compassion.

In Luba’s story we observe a biased family who mistreats the immigrant not knowing that she had left a career in her country of origin. Luba represents the stereotyped migrant women who have been trying to defend their basic rights to receive a visa by getting organized in workers’ unions.

The Neapolitan doorman Nino does not want to acknowledge the assets of hardworking individuals such as the Chinese because he is fearful to lose his job. This xenophobic tendency to fear loss of jobs to the migrants has derived historically by political austerity in the latest decades. (Carney, 2020)

In this we can infer a consciousness of how migrants can interact with the Neapolitan population and help each other interchangeably. The immigrants as carriers of positive contributions to the local environment is a very important message especially for the current political context, we are living in. Naples in its history has seen several populations alternate forming a multiethnic society. *Vieni a vivere a Napoli* is a film portraying the positive view of multiethnic humanity and it makes us reject the stereotypes imparted by xenophobic campaigns.

A more recent *docu-reality* film, *Rosa Pietra e Stella* (2020) by Marcello Sannino, is set in the outskirts of Naples. The film is based on a real person known by the director. It is the story of a single mother who struggles to find a stable occupation to support her daughter. Carmela’s vane ambitions lead her to become involved in providing immigrant clients to a lawyer who specializes in false work visas. Soon enough she realizes how unsupportive she has been to her daughter, especially when she is evicted from her house. She fights to keep her daughter Maria from being taken away by the social services. Out of despair, she decides to involve Tarek, an Algerian immigrant, in her false promises to obtain visas for some of his fellow countrymen. However, it is Tarek who eventually helps Carmela when she is in trouble.

Carmela represents the struggles of those citizens who live on the margin of society and for this reason lapse into practices that may become criminal.

The director Marcello Sannino is well known for his previous works in documentaries such as Corde, La seconda natura, Porta Capuana. *Rosa Pietra e Stella* is his first *docu-reality* with some fictional elements. The director in an interview at the 56th International New Cinema Festival in Pesaro in 2020, explained that his film is experimental in a way that focuses on the humanity of the characters more so the environment and the city of Naples per se. “It is about the interviewed relationships between the characters. Particularly, how the main character, Carmela, is first involved in providing black work to immigrants and then finding herself in the same conditions of unacceptable discrimination leading her into clandestinely life. It is a film that deals with social injustice and dehumanization especially for women who are too often biased by societies.”

Marcello Sannino also claimed that his approach to fiction is not dissimilar to presenting documentaries. In fact, all cinematic productions can be called “fiction” since there is a decision taken before recording the scenes and ow to connect the parts of the plot together. In this sense the director is only trying a different approach to tell a story.

The ento-anthropological view which Marcello Sannino approaches in his *docu-reality* is interesting because it is not completely a fiction with a “lieto fine” or “happy ending” nor is a documentary with a partial view in the development of a character.

Both films *Rosa Pietra e Stella* and *Vieni a vivere a Napoli* aim to evaluate coexistence and humanity between different cultures. present the integration processes for both immigrants and locals as a struggle which they share and, peculiarly, unites them.

These *docu-realities* do not offer immediate solutions; however, they represent cultural transfer vehicles from one culture to another towards the process of integration.

Maria Eugenia Cadeddu in her *Migration Stories, linguaggi, culture, identita’* (2020)claims: “I libri, dunque, possono assumere piu' ruoli: essere oggetto di studio, in quanto veicoli di trasferimenti culturali” or “Books, therefore, can assume more roles: to be the object of study, as vehicles of cultural transfers”. (p.68)

As books and literature may propose cultural transfer, also films and *docu-realities* can contribute as instruments of information, analysis and criticism within the complex reality of migratory phenomena.

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