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Migration, masculinity and 'double occupancy' in Paola Randi's *Into Paradiso*

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Abstract

The advent of the Italian Second Republic coincides with a phase of uncertainty about national identity. The 1990s was the decade in which Italy was no longer a country of emigration but became a land of immigration. Italian cinema registered this right away, and films on the topic of immigration continue to grow steadily. Paola Randi's *Into Paradiso* (2010) is a rare comedy about immigration; this article shows how the film presents migratory dynamics and a 'post-national' feeling of identity. The analysis focuses on the representation of space and stereotypes of masculinity, as well as the representation of those 'Italian vices' which have been, throughout the ages, an integral component of the Italian national identity project.

Keywords

Cultural identity, Italian women's cinema, migration cinema, post-nationalism

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During the Italian Second Republic, particularly following traumatic events such as the collapse of the political system and the formation of the European Union after Maastricht, the Italian cinema registered a crisis of national identity. In particular, events connected to globalisation, the consequences of the new economy and the transnational migratory flows involved a more problematic representation of social, political and cultural identity. In this article, we will focus on Paola Randi's *Into Paradiso* (2010), a comedy that depicts the Italian identity crisis in the context of new migration. We will examine how this film describes the contemporaneity by taking on a perspective that is unusual in Italian migration cinema, taking the representation of spaces and cultural identity as the main parameters for analysis and interpretation.

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***Into Paradiso* and contemporary Italian migration cinema**

The advent of the Italian Second Republic coincides with a phase of uncertainty about national identity. A migratory wave of unprecedented proportions (see Maciotti and Pugliese, 2010; Bonifazi,

2007; Colombo and Sciortino, 2004) is added to the turmoil of internal politics (connected to the ‘Tangentopoli Storm’ and the rise of new political subjects) and international politics (largely due to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Maastricht Treaty). The first laws on the subject date back to this period (the only and incomplete antecedent was the law of 1986). However, from the Martelli Law (1990) onwards, Italian laws governing immigration have attempted to contain the phenomenon in a shortsighted manner — indeed, they have concentrated primarily on controlling the migratory flows rather than on strengthening the rights of immigrants and improving their integration into the social fabric.

According to widespread opinion among historians and sociologists, the nineties were a period in which Italy discovered that it was no longer a country of emigration and that it had become a land of internal and particularly external immigration.¹ Italian cinema registered the range of this phenomenon right away, typically in opposition to the feelings of anxiety and hostility that were diffused or instigated by the media. The first films on immigration date back to the nineties, and their number continues to grow steadily, which is probably due to the debate surrounding the restrictive law of 2002 (known as ‘Bossi-Fini’) and the ‘Maroni Decree’ (2009).²

A wide variety of films are worthy of mention; these include *Lamerica* (Gianni Amelio, 1996),³ *Vesna va veloce* (*Vesna Goes Fast*, Carlo Mazzacurati, 1996), *Ospiti* (*Guests*, Matteo Garrone, 1998), *Il vento fa il suo giro* (*The Wind Blows Round*, Giorgio Diritti, 2005), *Saimir* (Francesco Munzi, 2005), *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti* (*Once You’re Born You Can No Longer Hide*, Marco Tullio Giordana, 2005), *Le ferie di Licu* (*Licu’s Holidays*, Vittorio Moroni, 2006), *La giusta distanza* (*The Right Distance*, Carlo Mazzacurati, 2007), *Cose dell’altro mondo* (*Things from Another World*, Francesco Patierno, 2011) and *Terraferma* (Emanuele Crialesi, 2011). The feminine contributions, with a few exceptions that we will mention below, are mainly documentaries — for example, *Il mondo addosso* (*The Weight of the World*, Costanza Quatriglio, 2006), *Sei del mondo* (*You Belong to the World*, Camilla Ruggiero, 2006), *Altra Europa* (*Other Europe*, Rossella Schillaci, 2008), *Ritratto di famiglia con badante* (*Portrait of a Family with Caregiver*, Alessandra Speciale, 2009), *Io sono: Storie di schiavitù* (*I am: Histories of Slavery*, Barbara Cupisti, 2011), *Ferrhotel* (Mariangela Barbanente, 2011) and *Nadea e Sveta* (Maura Delpero, 2012).

Obviously, interest in immigration is not restricted to Italy; it is a Europe-wide phenomenon, and often narrated by a generation of ‘accented’ filmmakers (see Naficy, 2001) — a generation that is fundamentally missing in Italy (see, however, Lombardi-Diop and Romeo, 2012; De Franceschi, 2013). What we want to emphasise is rather the repercussion of the phenomenon on the cinematic representation of national identity, which is a very current one in Italian migration cinema (where, in most cases, the presence of an immigrant opens an abyss in the identity of the Italian protagonist).

What is surprising in this context is the scarcity of comedies specifically focused on migration. Apart from rare exceptions — like Patierno’s film, which is, however, a comedy about Italians facing the hypothetical ‘disappearance’ of all immigrants on the territory — we can mention only a few films directed by women: Roberta Torre’s *Sud Side Stori* (2000), Cristina Comencini’s *Bianco e nero* (*Black and White*, 2008) and Paola Randi’s *Into Paradiso* (2010). This is a remarkable point for both productive and cultural reasons.

Contemporary production data and research confirm that comedy, in all its forms, is the main Italian film genre, based on both the number of productions and the average viewership (Montini and Zagarrío, 2012). Italian comedies are the most watched national movies, and they are sometimes more successful than American comedies. Nevertheless, it is likely that comedy is unsuitable for dealing with the crisis of identity in reaction to contemporary migrations; indeed, comedy is successful inasmuch as it represents familiar situations, thus strengthening the national identity. For example, Francesco Casetti and Gaetano Salvemini relate the success of Italian comedy to its comforting correlation to specific social contexts, which makes it particularly 'authentic' in the eyes of the audience (Casetti and Salvemini, 2007).

Additionally, as stated by Maurizio Grande according to Northrop Frye, the comedy represents a new order, which establishes itself through a hero's integration into society (Grande, 2003). We must remember how, especially from the sixties onwards, the Italian-style comedy has accompanied the evolution of Italian national identity (Comand, 2010).⁴ In doing so, it contributed to the symbolic resolution of the conflict between individual and society. This task remains uncontested to this day: undoubtedly, as recently pointed out, contemporary Italian comedy continues to imagine a national community, although contemporary society has become increasingly complex and stratified (De Pascalis, 2012).

It is possible that the scarcity of comedies about immigration mirrors an Italian common sense given that, on an international level, the number of films dealing with the topic in 'lighthearted' manner is increasing — these include *East is East* (Damien O'Dollen, 1999), *Jalla! Jalla!* (Josef Fares, 2000), *Bend It Like Beckham* (Gurinder Chadha, 2002), *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (Joel Zwick, 2002), *Ae Fond Kiss* (Ken Loach, 2004), *Le Graine et le Mulet* (Abdellatif Kechiche, 2007), *Soul Kitchen* (Fatih Akin, 2009) or *Le Havre* (Aki Kaurismäki, 2011).⁵

Into Paradiso fits more into this European cinema trend, and it seems to question the national identity in a singular way when compared to the majority of contemporary Italian films. The film tells a story about the coexistence and integration of two different identities, and in doing so it embraces a particular sensitivity to national narratives and symbols, one that can be labelled as 'postnational' (see the next section).

In particular, as we will argue below, one of the film's points of interest is the problematisation of masculinity as a distinctive element of Italian national identity. After all, even if a comprehensive and essentialist definition of the genre is not desirable, the overall comedy can be regarded as a matter of gender roles, as 'comedy often mocks the masculinity that tragedy ennobles' (Kathleen Rowe, quoted in Horton and Rapf, 2013: 3). Moreover, according to Paola Randi, the deconstruction of stereotypes can be regarded as a 'common denominator' among female filmmakers:

First of all, we need to consider that women in film all have some common experience, which is the struggle for equality; this should be translated into new ideas far from male stereotypes. [...] In *Into Paradiso*, I tried to depict both women and men outside certain stereotypes' (Di Bianco, 2013: 260).

Therefore, Randi uses the tools of comedy — for example, some inheritances of Italian-style comedy, particularly with regard to the representation of masculinity — to renegotiate the threshold of what is laughable, thus deconstructing national identity. Moreover, while maintaining a typical lightness of tone, the film frequently reaches the caricatural stylisation of grotesque, particularly regarding the representation of bodies and spaces. In doing so, it triggers a

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twofold significance of grotesque: on the one hand, it suggests the uncanny ambiguity of a world that became more and more foreign; on the other hand, it exercises an affirmative, creative power that subverts the institutional culture (see De Gaetano, 1999).

Into Paradiso evokes a mix of tones that allow the director a creative manipulation of norms and codes, in a play that combines ‘control and freedom’ (Horton, 1991: 5). The film imagines a more inclusive community in celebrating a non-monolithic idea of identity, and through the prism of comedy, in the face of a society that does not seem inclined to laugh about its identity crisis.

Evidently, as we will see, the community imagined in the film remains a national one; however, the connections between state and national culture are investigated with a postnational sensitivity through film style, narrative trajectories and characters’ traits. In the concluding section, after the analysis of the film, we will argue that the twist of cultures and migratory dynamics is presented in *Into Paradiso* according to the paradigm of ‘double occupancy’ (Elsaesser, 2005; 2009). However, before proceeding, we need to clarify the meaning we will attribute to the aforementioned, and controversial, notion of ‘postnationalism’ — that indicates, in the use we do here, a particular feeling of identity and belonging as it appears in cultural artifacts like narrative films.

A digression on postnationalism

The idea of ‘postnationalism,’ a very popular term in the nineties, is connected to globalisation understood as the ‘intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole’ (Robertson, 1992: 8); in fact, with the advent of a new global context, the topic of identity seemed to lose its strong connection to the strategies of the national states. Nevertheless, as is commonly accepted, the optimistic connotation of this vision was largely downsized after the attacks of September 11, 2001. This has also entailed a general moderation in the use of the term itself; in fact, according to some scholars, after September 11, a ‘return of the State’ was founded on new principles, such as the security of the citizens and their physical integrity.

The matter is complex, and we will not pretend to deal with it exhaustively. For our purposes, what is important is to remember that the postnational condition, even in the classic theorisations of Bhabha or Appadurai, refers to a feeling more than to a state of things. It does not imply an actual end of the nation: rather, as Thomas Elsaesser writes, it is a particular ‘attitude to cultural identity’ (Elsaesser, 2005: 71), which does not deny the national identity but questions it in light of the new condition of the nation-states. Moreover, it is significant that postnationalism undermines and reformulates the sentiment of belonging: as Ulf Hedetoft and Mette Hjort suggest in their introduction to the book *The Postnational Self*, globalisation has produced a fracture that implies a “‘being” in one place, and “longing” for another’ (Hedetoft and Hjort, 2002: vii). Therefore, it is still possible to investigate ‘how the *nation* may be conceived as a communicative space’ (Schlesinger, 2000: 19), although assuming a postnational perspective.

If postnationalism relates to a peculiar way of understanding identity, this feeling may result in a particular practice of narration in the cultural products. This is why the notion of ‘postnational narration,’ suggested by the literary theorist Donald Pease, is remarkably helpful, although we do not embrace all its implications. According to Pease, who follows Bhabha’s *DissemiNation*, the

adjective 'postnational' indicates 'the site in between the nation and the state'; therefore, postnational narrations aim 'to make visible the incoherence, contingency, and transitoriness of the national narratives, and to reveal this paradoxical space' (Pease, 1997: 3, 7). Furthermore, postnational narrations take a position against 'national' narrations in relation to the categories of race, class and gender, which are no longer identified as universal rules but are rather 'redescribed as dependent

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[...] on an overcoming of surface differences between dominant and dominated social groups' (Pease, 1994: 8). The integrity of national identity is denaturalised and called into question, as the postnational narrations highlight the fissures of identity — namely, the elements that are culturally constructed, politically determined and may be modifiable. Therefore, a postnational narration also reveals the crisis of the sense of national spaces, favoring the instability of the feeling of national identity, thereby making incoherent or problematic the sense of territorial belonging.

In my analysis of *Into Paradiso*, the reference to postnationalism will emerge precisely from the narrative structure, the configuration of spaces and from the use of national stereotypes (particularly gender stereotypes). In this context, the reference to postnationalism seems more appropriate than the reference to transnationalism, which, however, indicates a productive perspective for contemporary film and media studies. The distinction between the two terms does not correspond only to a matter of undertones, and it deserves to be briefly discussed.

Despite the many meanings that have been ascribed to it in film and media studies, 'transnationalism' generally refers to the phenomenon of the global sharing of national collective imaginaries or to concrete operative practices that overstep both the idea of national production and international coproduction. A 'transnational aesthetics' is based on these points, which only partially overlap with the features of postnationalism. Let us recall, for example, the aesthetics outlined by Randal Halle in his book about contemporary German cinema (Halle, 2008): The scholar refers to transnationalism, and he identifies in eight points the peculiar features of the new transnational aesthetics in Germany.⁶ Only the seventh point is compatible with the idea of postnational narration explained above: 'The content of a film extends to occupy the new social space opened up by transnational material connections.' (Halle, 2008: 86) A film, in Halle's words, imagines communities, and since economic relations and global politics are increasingly interconnected, the forms of representation tend to increasingly reproduce these mechanisms; hence, 'Films in the transnational era do imagine communities and they do so transnationally' (Halle, 2008: 87). It is only in this last respect that we could speak of 'transnational aesthetics' with regard to *Into Paradiso*. However, it is evident that when examining a film that has been produced using national assets, and which has mainly circulated in Italy (with the notable exception of film festivals), we cannot adopt Halle's model wholesale.

As a final remark, the use of the notion of transnationalism sometimes implies an overshooting of the 'pre-September 11' postnationalism. Halle, for example, is explicitly opposed to that enthusiastic version, and even recognising the crisis of the link between state and nation, he does not accept its loss of meaning. The nation can be still a relevant political and cultural benchmark, because 'the imagined community is not an imaginary community' (Halle, 2008: 25).⁷ We share his skepticism; however, this does not prevent us from favoring the adjective 'postnational' in regard to *Into Paradiso*'s structure and style. Keeping these remarks in mind, we

can now move to the film's analysis, reserving further considerations about the crisis of national identity for our conclusions.

National identity and territorial belonging

The first point of interest in *Into Paradiso* is that it interlaces two narrative trajectories and two main characters, the Italian Alfonso D'Onofrio and the Sri Lankan Gayan Pereira.

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Their paths soon cross, and their collaboration will become crucial for the utopistic conclusion of the film. It is important to emphasise that the Sri Lankan protagonist is an autonomous character, who is neither a foil for Alfonso nor a deuteragonist (as is typically the case in Italian migration films). Therefore, there is no preferred perspective. Numerous rhymes and symmetries between the storylines suggest parallels between the two characters in the film; however, they are assimilated only to underline their common experience of being foreigners in their own house. Indeed, they both experience a crisis of cultural identity and of a sense of belonging.

The main space in which the film is set is represented as *in-between* and basically hybrid,⁸ and it contributes in representing the characters' crisis. The 'Paradiso' of the title is the name of a *fondaco* (tenement) building that is located in the center of Naples.⁹ The film is primarily located in that space, which hybridizes the structures of a Neapolitan tenement with the symbols and colors of the Sri Lankan culture. This spacial in-betweenness is doubled in the title through the ambiguous preposition 'into': Indeed, the term could seem English, but it actually comes from the dialect of Naples (in which 'into' stands for the Italian 'dentro', 'inside'). Therefore, the title of the film is meaningful: The ambiguity between the global language par excellence and a local dialect characterises immediately the nature of the space in which the affairs of the two protagonists intersect.

The Sri Lankan protagonist Gayan is a famous former cricketer who migrates to Italy thinking that he could maintain his high standard of living. But for him, his arrival in the 'Paradiso' community is, first of all, an encounter with social otherness: he is rich and famous, whereas his anonymous compatriots do menial jobs. Soon, to be able to purchase a flight to return to Sri Lanka, he will have to accept a job as a servant.

It is through Gayan's astonished gaze that the viewer discovers the hidden space of the Sri Lankan community: the gaze of a Sinhalese who turns out to be a foreigner in his own home **[Figure 1]**. 'We are home:' this is what Stanley, Gayan's cousin, says when the two reach the 'Paradiso' building for the first time. It is worthwhile to remember that cricket is a national sport in Sri Lanka, and that Gayan is welcomed and recognised by the community as a celebrity. We will return to this point in the next section, as the rules of cricket also imply a model of masculinity.

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The Italian protagonist, Alfonso, is a biology researcher who has lost his job due to the economic crisis and the resulting university funding cuts. Alfonso asks his friend, the politician Vincenzo Cacace, for an intercession, and this request leads Alfonso to become involved in the relationship between the politician and *camorra*. While escaping from a shooting, Alfonso finds shelter in the Paradiso building, where he is looked after by Giacinta, a Sri Lankan astrologist:

Alfonso falls in love with her, and he starts a clumsy courtship that induces him to conform to Sri Lankan habits.

Alfonso's job is an integral aspect of his sociocultural identity. In fact, Alfonso, not by chance, studies the phenomenon of cellular migration to defeat cancer and more generally, he says, he studies the ways in which cells 'communicate' with each other their very presence in a specific place. In other words, through Alfonso's profession, the film alludes to a 'global' dimension that is crossed by migrants and polluted by 'local' cancer-causing agents. Alfonso demonstrates this attitude throughout the film: In the beginning, he examines the phenomenon of migration through a microscope, while in the end, he concretely practices his interest in migration and communication inside the Italian-Sri Lankan multicultural community.

As previously stated, the sense of the film depends largely on the construction of the spaces. The hybrid vitality of the Sri Lankan community space is opposed to the narrow and lifeless Neapolitan (and Italian) spaces. An example is the *camorra* headquarters, located in an out-of-use supermarket — a place deprived of its original vital function [Figure 2]. We should also mention the desolation of the surrounding urban areas [Figure 3] or of the cubicle in which the politician Vincenzo Cacace enthusiastically repeats his electoral speech [Figure 4]. Even the luxurious villa in which Gayan works as a servant emphasises the distance between the people. Finally, we mention Alfonso's home, which is situated among the gravestones in the cemetery where his mother used to work.

In *Into Paradiso*, Italy is represented as a mortiferous, desolated space that is unable to support shared experiences and that can not become a *relational* space. This inability to create a genuine communitarian identity is a central feature of the 'Italian character' as depicted in the film. In our view, the Italian spaces in the film cannot be regarded as 'national' in the full meaning of the word; indeed, they express a fragile national identity that is grounded in excessive individualism and lacks a sense of common projectuality.

Contrastingly, the space of the Sri Lankan community is fully collective [Figure 5]: It is a place of warm and collaborative family relationships, shared religious rituals and

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cultural symbols that are identifiable, although inevitably hybridised. We think of the big inner courtyard as well as Stanley's workshop, where icons of different religions are placed side by side (Stanley is Buddhist, but he works as a manufacturer of statues for cribs).

In conclusion, the representation of spaces, through a rift between territory and sense of belonging, suggests the idea of a postnational identitary model. Indeed, the locations create a short circuit between the migrant identity and the local one: We are in Italy, but only the hybrid settings of the Paradiso building are relational spaces, and the only possible community emerges in the commingling of spaces and the reversibility of the boundaries. The Italian spaces — that is, the strictly national ones — are empty, violent and oppressive, and they express a split between nation and territory.

National identity and masculinity

The 'clash of identities' portrayed in *Into Paradiso* is also a matter of masculinity. As previously mentioned, in a postnational narration, the categories of race, class and

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gender are not displayed as unproblematic universal rules. In this section, we will show how, in *Into Paradiso*, structures and stereotypes of masculinity (see Zhang, 2013) are connected to national identity.¹⁰

We begin with the character of Alfonso. He is heavily dependent on his relationship with his mother, who died four years earlier. At the beginning of the film, we see Alfonso engaging in a strange and superstitious ritual handed down to him by his mother. A picture of her is displayed prominently in the framing, whereas Alfonso's face — namely, the element that marks his individual identity — is carefully kept out of sight [**Figure 6**]. In the meantime, a newscaster talks about the economic crisis and, in doing so, immediately alludes to contemporary Italy. The theme of Italian identity is already a question of masculinity: From the beginning of the film, Alfonso is presented as a victim of *momism*, conditioned by the protective presence of the mother and subordinate to her. The missing maturation of this 'mommy's boy' implies that Alfonso gives up his own independence, relying on superstitious rituals that are simulacra of an effective interaction with the world. Indeed, Alfonso goes through events passively: even the idea to seek out

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Cacace's help to regain his employment is suggested to him by a friend, instead of on his own initiative. Moreover, it is significant that these two elements — *momism* and clientelism — transcend the features of a specific character, as they are normally evoked in the discussion about the 'Italian character' and its 'vices' (see Patriarca, 2013).

The dependence of the Italians on the maternal figure has been theorised by Ernst Bernhard in the well-known mythologem of the Great Mediterranean Mother — 'a mother who spoils her sons with the maximum of instinctiveness' (quoted in Ginsborg, 2011: 110), rendering them dependent and in constant search of an existential and working stability. However, what the psychoanalyst describes in mythical and immutable terms is also a historical stereotype that arises between the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, together with the Italian nation, with a particular emphasis on maternity and its omnipotence.¹¹ Alfonso fits this description well: In the course of the film, he searches for stability and flees danger (he is a coward: this is why, he is told, Giacinta does not want him as her husband). He is a nonassertive man who is incapable of managing situations (he remains in a subordinate position even while pointing a gun), and his regressive dependence on the maternal model is continuously proved in the film by means of postures, clothes and objects [**Figure 7**].

The actor Gianfelice Imparato is known as a character actor, and his figure in *Into Paradiso* seems to descend from some masculine types of Italian-style comedy. This latter has contributed to defining the stereotype of the modern Italian male, one that is very distant from the mythology of 'virility', even when he dissembles his regressive traits; this is another invention of the nationalist rhetoric of the end of the nineteenth century — a mythology that is so common that even today many Italian dictionaries continue to consider 'virility' a synonym of 'masculinity' (see Bellassai, 2011). The masculinity embodied by Alfonso is complex, and it is significantly contrasting the winning mythology of virility; however, Alfonso is also distant from the figure of the seducer and the 'Latin lover' of the Italian-style comedy. After all, as demonstrated by Jacqueline Reich in a study devoted to Mastroianni, behind this symbol of Italian masculinity is hidden the *inetto*, a character related to the instability of gender roles in postwar Italy (Reich, 2004). Alfonso is such an

inept man: when he attempts to imitate the stereotype of the seducer, he does it only in his imagination, and even there in an inadequate manner. During the invasion of the building by members of the *camorra*, Alfonso,

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with earplugs in his ears, imagines a romantic encounter with Giacinta, drawing on the cultural stereotype (that emerges, for example, in the confusion between Sri Lankan and Indian clothing) and on the parody of the Latin lover **[Figure 8]**.¹² The *camorra* men, needless to say, are portrayed as big, rude, determined and violent. After this episode, which happens at the second turning point of the film, it will be Giacinta — a woman and a migrant — who wakes Alfonso up from his fantasy, banishing him from the ‘Paradiso’ as an unwanted guest — a foreigner in his own home.

As previously stated, *Into Paradiso* compares different models of masculinity. The representation of the Sri Lankan community is completely lacking the grotesque quality reserved for the Italians (not only Alfonso but also Vincenzo or Don Fefè), and the Sri Lankan characters never degenerate into caricatures; however, even they are bearers of models of masculinity that are linked to their own cultural and social conditions.

Let us first examine Gayan. His body is proportioned and harmonic, and his gestures are controlled **[Figure 9]**. This is a legacy of cricket, a sport that played a fundamental role in the definition of masculinity as performance, both in England and in the former colonies (Bateman, 2010). For this reason, the cricketer has been traditionally regarded as a symbol of courage and virility (Roberts, 2005). Furthermore, as Appadurai wrote in a famous chapter of his *Modernity at Large*, cricket is a sport that expresses ‘masculine’ codes, such as the control of sentiments and the subordination of personal interests to those of the group, thereby also overstepping social boundaries (Appadurai, 1996: 89-113). This is exactly what Gayan says to Alfonso at the end of the film, while teaching him to communicate efficiently, ‘with just a gaze,’ with the members of a team (namely, a community).

However, Gayan’s masculinity goes into crisis by the time he arrives in Italy as a result of the confrontation with his compatriots, who carry out domestic roles traditionally attributed to women. His cousin, Stanley, who represents the average male of the Sri Lankan community, embodies the submissive masculinity of the immigrant who does domestic jobs — a ‘feminized’ masculinity that is connected to the recent history of migrations.

The first Sri Lankan migrants to Italy were primarily women who worked as servants; however, from the nineties onwards, it became easier for their husbands to reach them. In particular,

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in Naples, the Sri Lankans created a network of solidarity and expanded families whose members were able to offer them opportunities to work. The men, especially the Sinhalese, started then to be employed in the domestic sector. In this consists the ‘feminization’ of the immigrant man: The husbands started following lifestyles that were already modelled by their wives and family women, thereby strengthening the widespread colonial stereotype of the Indian males as effeminate in comparison with the mannish and noble englishmen. This is a consequence of what happens in countries, such as Italy, which do not offer more qualified work opportunities: The immigrants who work as servants have to be docile, compliant and apt to adaptation to demonstrate that they are as efficient as their women. The contradiction of the migrant masculinity is precisely connected to this dynamic, which paradoxically offers the migrants a model of respectable masculinity (Gallo, 2007).

However, in the film, Stanley seems to ‘play’ with this stereotype, and his docile and timorous masculinity has the traits of a performance. We do not think that the performative element exhausts the gender dynamics; still, in *Into Paradiso*, the notion of performance is adequate for the behaviour of this character. Stanley’s masculinity, which is made of remissive postures and sharp peaks in tone of voice, is the only model that enables survival in the ‘forced coexistence’ with the Italian family for whom he works as the gardener [Figure 10]. Moreover, it is useful to underline how Stanley adopts these feminine behaviours only when he is working as a gardener — that is, when he wears an apron — and not, for example, during the execution of the Sri Lankan community rituals.¹³

In representing the encounters among different models of masculinity, *Into Paradiso*’s postnational narration highlights their nonuniversal features: The forms of masculinity are part of the national identities, and their juxtaposition implicitly reminds us of how they are culturally and historically determined.

Conclusion: National identity and ‘double occupancy’

Into Paradiso narrates the story of a double experience of estrangement in a space that jeopardizes both cultures and the sense of belonging. Therefore, the film enables us to reflect on the Italian identity at the time of the new migratory flows from a perspective that is unusual in

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contemporary Italian migration cinema. As we have seen, it is especially through the representation of spaces and forms of masculinity that Paola Randi, with a postnational sensibility, represents an intertwinement in which the national identities cross and reflect themselves.

This mode of representation may constitute a kind of symbolic recomposition, as well as an antidote for the widespread fear of the Italian society. Indeed, Italy is firmly included among what Dominique Moïsi has labeled as ‘cultures of fear’ (Moïsi, 2009). Based on Moïsi’s perspective, oriental cultures — not necessarily former colonies — are a better fit with the condition of the new globalised world, as they were already accustomed to living in two parallel worlds (namely, theirs and the one dominated by the West). Conversely, Europe, particularly due to its history, seems to be increasingly afflicted by identity problems that are even more serious than, for example, those facing the United States. Moïsi’s work reminds us that among the principal effects of the globalised world, we can include the claim for identity and the insecurity caused by the forced relations with the other.

This is a crucial point: The dimension of cultural identity/diversity brings into play not entities but relations. *Into Paradiso* delineates the possibility of a relational space in which the identities can be renegotiated. The principles are those underlined by Veronica Pravadelli (2013) — namely, the principles of ‘reciprocity’ and ‘reversibility’ between the two male protagonists, as well as between the borders that circumscribe the real and symbolic spaces.

A post-national approach is rare in Italian cinema; however, it is more common in European productions. In particular, the intersubjective dynamics staged by Paola Randi lead one to think of the notion of ‘double occupancy’, which Thomas Elsaesser recognises as typical of the new European cinema. But why talk about ‘occupancy’ rather than ‘identity’? Undoubtedly, to overcome the problems intrinsic to expressions such as ‘cultural diversity’ and ‘multiculturalism,’

that seems unfair, particularly toward the European populations who struggle to obtain a national and cultural identity. The paradigm, as Elsaesser writes, is provided by the Eastern European populations: Their identity conflicts remind us that the cultural and geopolitical territories of Europe are always already occupied. Therefore, the term *occupancy* ‘may serve as a historical reminder that

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Europe is a continent whose two- or three-thousand-year history has been, until very recently, a relentless catalogue of migrations, invasions, occupations, conquests, pogroms, expulsions and exterminations’ (Elsaesser, 2009: 51).

Moreover, the idea of ‘double occupancy’ implies a sense of reversibility that allows the rearticulation of identities and diversities; furthermore, it provides a useful metaphor for the cultural forms that represent the new identity phenomena. The ‘doubly occupied’ communities are fragmented in subcultures and subnations made up ‘of those who do not feel allegiance to the nation-state in the first place, because they are immigrants, refugees or asylum seekers, and who live within their own diasporic communities and closed family or faith circles’ (Elsaesser, 2009: 51).

In *Into Paradiso*, as we have seen, this condition significantly characterises both the Italian and the Sri Lankan protagonist. The principle of reversibility causes us to rethink the relationship between us-them and inside-outside. ‘Double occupancy’ is a term that brings into play ‘politics and power, subjectivity and faith, recognition and rejection, [and] maybe even irreconcilable claims between particular beliefs and universal values, between what is “yours” and “mine”.’ In doing so, it recalls the Wittgensteinian figure of the duck-rabbit — namely, a ‘sign of the co-extensiveness of two perceptions in a single representational space’ (Elsaesser, 2005: 110). The duck-rabbit figure, in fact, fits the model of community depicted in *Into Paradiso* — neither Italian nor completely Sri Lankan. This is why we can regard this film as an Italian contribution, comical and utopian, to an important tendency of contemporary European cinema: double occupancy indicates a cultural form, and a representative modality, related to the problematic identity of Europe and the nations of which it is composed.

The idea of Europe as a patchwork of recent and culturally heterogeneous nation-states reminds us how recent the history of the Italian nation-state is and how fragmented and weak the Italian national project has been.¹⁴ As stated for example by Manlio Graziano, with a particular focus on the geopolitical dimension of national identity, Italy ‘is born of an extraordinary combination of factors, notably international ones, from which the great powers have made profit,’ and not of the struggle for the development of a middle class. This is revealed by the common ‘political and cultural inclination orientated more towards the diplomatic ploys than towards the necessities of the economy’, as well as by the attitude of the Italian ruling class towards the ‘concern for immediate particular interest [that] has nearly always predominated over the necessity of defining the *general interest*’ (Graziano, 2010: 2). Not by chance, in *Into Paradiso*, the themes of clientelism and *camorra* are directly related to the representation of a fragile cultural and national identity, which is incapable of sustaining the weight of contemporary migrations.

Are we dealing with a new version of the complaint about the ‘Italian vices’? In fact, as outlined above, the film’s postnational perspective reminds us of the constructed (namely historical and cultural) nature of the nationalist discourses. *Into Paradiso* does not overstep the topic of the

nation as the center of identity aggregation; nonetheless, it emphasises its weak points and crisis. So, yes, the film contributes to the definition of Italian behaviour through the complaint about its vices, thus adopting the legacy of Italian-style comedy.

However, in my opinion, Paola Randi's operation is neither neutral nor ahistorical. We must remember that since their appearance, the debates about 'Italian vices' have been part of a political strategy aimed at building an Italian character. As Silvana Patriarca

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wrote recently, the Italian national identity is substantiated by a discourse about the national vices that have taken place at least since the Risorgimento. The discourses about the national character are related to the processes of nationalization and to the patriotism of the end of the eighteenth century, and they express the interests of the elites:

The idea of Italian character was [...] originally part of the intellectual and rhetorical repertory of Italian nationalism, and a tool of nation-building, a means of calling the inhabitants of the peninsula not just to life [...], but to a more demanding kind of collective life, namely to existence as a modern nation (Patriarca, 2013: 8).

Briefly, the Italian vices have been emphasised and handed down by historically determined political debates, which have been, throughout the ages, an integral component of the national identity project.¹⁵

The complaint about vices in the Italian-style comedy was inserted into this process, thereby reactualising it and contributing in a decisive manner to the reconstruction of Italian identity in the postwar period. Ruth Ben-Ghiat recalled that in the Italian-style comedy, the connections between masculinity, momism, immaturity and failure were part of a process of 'rewriting' the fascist virility (Ben-Ghiat, 2005). It seems to us that *Into Paradiso* further actualises this tendency, transposing it in the context of the Italian crisis in the globalised world. We may hypothesise that, in this contemporary comedy, the stereotypes of masculinity, generally neglected or naturalised, are brought into play to review and correct the dominant cultural models in the years of the Second Republic and 'Berlusconism'. In other words, the problematisation and deconstruction of these models can be regarded as a productive principle upon which to start imagining a different community.

Notes

¹ On the experience and the identity of Italian emigrants, see Bertellini (2010).

² For an overview, see Schrader and Winkler (2013); Cincinelli (2012); Zagarrio (2012); Russo Bullaro (2010).

³ See Pravadelli (2013), which offers a reading that inspired part of the analysis conducted in this article.

⁴ For an historical approach to Italian identity and cinema, see Brunetta (1996); Sorlin (1996).

⁵ On the European context, see Rivi (2007); Berghahn and Sternberg (2010); De Pascalis (2015).

⁶ The qualities of Halle's 'transnational aesthetics' include new relations between modes of production and the orientation of film artifact, a new significance of producers and distributors, a

new consideration for marketability combined with stylistic experimentation and a new sensitivity for cultural specificity (see Halle, 2008: 83–88).

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⁷ For an overview on transnational perspectives in film studies, see Ezra and Rowden (2006); Ďurovičová and Newman (2010); with particular reference to gender studies, see Marciniak, Imre and O’Healy (2007).

⁸ On ‘hybridity’ as a key-notion, see Kraidy (2005).

⁹ In Naples, since the Seventies, is settled a community of circa seven thousand Sinhalese. They mainly work as servants: they are culturally and socially autonomous, not integrated but accepted by the social fabric and, contrary to how it appears in the film, not everybody speaks Italian (see Näre, 2008).

¹⁰ For an overview on masculinity in Italian cinema, see Reich and O’Rawe (2015).

¹¹ On the figure of the Italian mother as a national cultural stereotype, see D’Amelia (2005).

¹² *Into Paradiso* is a movie about alterity and stereotype. On the stereotype as a defensive formation, see R. Dyer (1993: 11-18).

¹³ Models of femininity are also represented in the film, especially with respect to motherhood and social class. We can mention, for example, minor characters as the rich and capricious lady or the Vincenzo Cacace’s curvy secretary. We have already mentioned Giacinta and Alfonso’s mother; we only remember that Giacinta represents a model of femininity, which is alternative to Italian female character: she is a responsible and practical woman, and she keeps herself in touch with the body, the nature and the cosmos.

¹⁴ On Italian national identity, see Galli Della Loggia (1998); Schiavone (1998); Crainz (2003); Di Rienzo (2006); and, with particular reference to the issue of immigration, Garau (2015).

¹⁵ Many Italian cosmopolitan intellectuals, moreover, borrowed from non-Italian writers a pejorative idea of the ‘Italian character’ — an idea which, in turn, was rooted in a kind of ‘envy’ of the Italian flourishing culture and economy during the Renaissance (Heller, 2003).

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